HE MAGAZINE OF THE WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA, WEST

THE WAY WE WERE

Chester Aaron

Ali Adler

Walter Bernstein

Marsha Hunt

Paul Jarrico

Adam Sztykiel

PLUS

Robin Hood's

Merry Writers

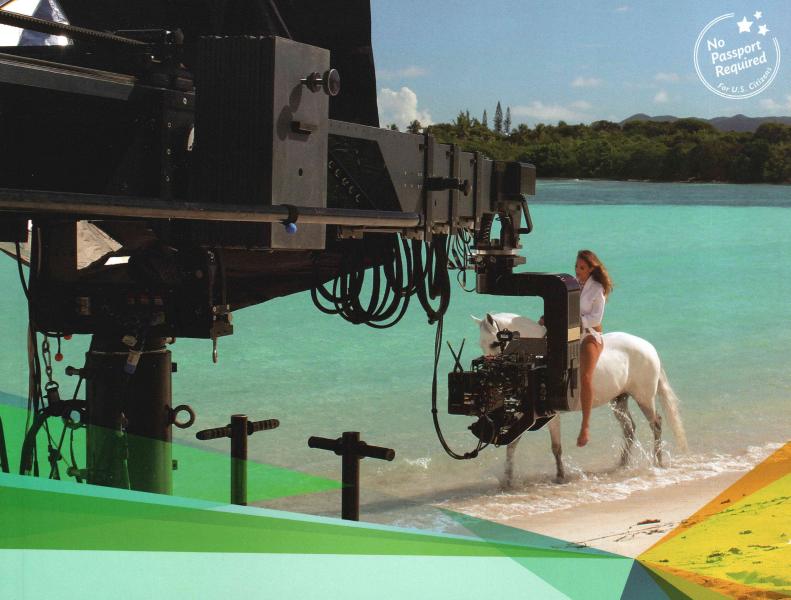
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JOHN McNAMARA INVESTIGATES TRUMBO

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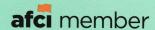
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BY ED RAMPELL

New Blacklist books are changing the game.

"The Blacklist was a time of evil. No one on either side who survived it came through untouched by evil."

—Dalton Trumbo WGA Laurel Award acceptance speech, 1970

A Blacklist issue? Why? Who'd want to read that? Ancient history, those inquisitions from 1945 to 1960.

Reactions while conducting an unscientific survey of a few writers. Floating the concept of a Blacklist issue. Here's a sample email exchange with a 20-something:

"What are your feelings about the Blacklist?"

"Envy. Lust. Greed."

"Yes, emotions definitely played a role. What about fear?"

"Fear? Only if my script's not made the list."

"LOL. I'm not asking about Hollywood's coveted scripts list. This is *the* Blacklist. When writers were denied credits and imprisoned, fired for being 'subversive' or communist sympathizers cause of anonymous accusations by the House Un-American Activities Committee, aka HUAC. The time of the toad, Dalton Trumbo called it."

"Geezer time. Honestly, who gives a fuck?"

"Writers better. The Blacklist's like a distant mirror. Communism=terrorism. Compare it to today's online invasions of privacy."

"Invade me. Please. Then pay me."

"You're putting me on?"

"Sure. Just spare me the those-who-don't-remember-the-past-are-doomed-to-repeat-it mantra."

"Understood. Just promise me you'll see Trumbo."

"If it's good."

"The biopic's about the Blacklist's impact on private lives."

"A biopic? Hate those. Who's Dalton Trumbo?"

So it went. The (*ahem*) writers of a certain age say it's time for another Blacklist issue—past time. And those who don't look back? See above.

But then I encounter an irresistible motivation: a treasure trove of Guild materials, never available until now. Materials changing the historical record, inspiring a new wave of research, setting the record straight.

Where did these materials come from? The Writers Guild Foundation Library and Archives. Buried in the Guild's vaults, found among the dust and desks crowding an off-premises storage unit. Since 2011, Guild archivist and Foundation librarian Joanne Lammers has systematically removed and processed box after box. Much of the contents were donated by members' families. Drafts of screenplays, diaries, notes, and letters going back to the Guild's founding in the 1930s.

Lammers literally stumbled into decades-old files of Guild records, folders with financial statements, legal cases, lawsuits against recalcitrant producers, and... drumroll please... copies of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) report. *The Screen Writer* magazine devoted to eloquent editorials decrying HUAC's attacks on the industry and the U.S. Constitution. A rare issue of the infamous *Red Channels*, specifying writers to be added to the Blacklist. The minutes of SWG Board meetings debating loyalty oaths.

This Written By came into being as Lammers and her dedicated

Written By

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WGAW PHONE INFORMATION

The Guild (All Departments)
323.951.4000 FAX 323.782.4800

WEBSITE: WWW.WGA.ORG

WGAW DEPARTMENTS 323.951.4000

Administration 782.4520 Agency 782.4502

Awards & Elections 782.4569

Claims 782.4663 Contracts 782.4501

Credits782.4528
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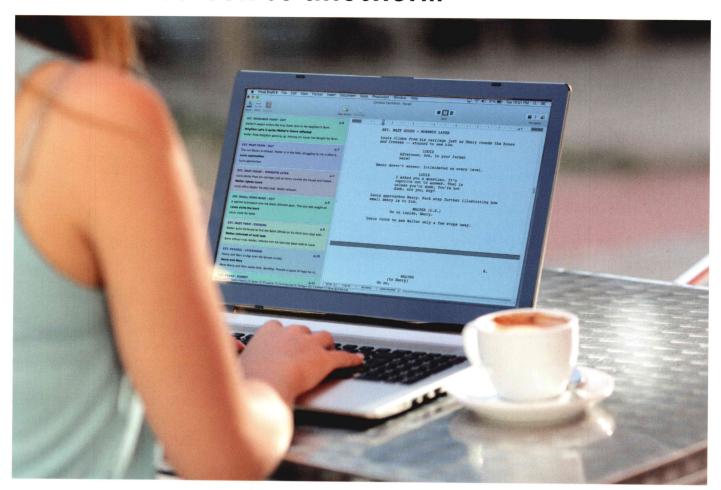
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From one screen to another...







...whenever inspiration strikes



Foundation Library staff retrieved and organized the newly discovered Blacklist-era materials. Freelance archivist Barbara L. Hall's independent research uncovered iconic documents in the Academy's Margaret Herrick Library. Their expertise ultimately guided us into a Guild history that had been buried until now, perhaps by design.

For example, in 1951 the Screen Writers' Guild was under relentless attacks by HUAC and the press for allegedly promoting communism (what terrorism is to us, communism was then). Its voice, *The Screen Writer* (a predecessor to Written By), defunct, its members cited for contempt of Congress and in jail, others forced to grovel before a hostile Congress, others simply not permitted to write under their own name.

So the Guild's Board of Directors reluctantly agreed to sign a loyalty oath: "I am not a member of the communist party or affiliated with such party, and I do not believe in, and I am not a member of, nor do I support any organization that believes or teaches the overthrow of the united states government."

Deplorable? No. Political? Yes. Because on December 3, 1951, when the loyalty oath was drafted, the Board shrewdly added a clarification: "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, deep in the conviction that the Guild is a nonpolitical and a professional organization, we will resist any motion or efforts to impose on this Guild's general membership any loyalty oaths not required by law." Imagine the HUAC committee lawyers struggling to deconstruct that sleight of hand.

"How bad was it? Really?"

My young survey subject emailed again. Intrigued, he'd done some research and decided that the Blacklist might be worth some investigation. Maybe there's a script in it? This time I phoned him. Too much ground to cover. Let's talk.

In 1947, I said to my young writer, the Screen Writers' Guild began fighting back. All Hollywood had finally recognized that the government sought censorship. By then, the HUAC propaganda machine had turned public opinion against Hollywood, especially the SWG. "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Screen Writers Guild?" That was the committee's initial question. HUAC aimed to sink the writer's union. Yes, the committee was fighting communism. But writers posed a more immediate threat. Free expression: the enemy of the state.

The Guild created the Robert Meltzer Award, to celebrate courage in screenwriting.

Robert "Bob" Meltzer had worked with Chaplin on the script of *The Great Dictator* and collaborated with Orson Welles on the unfinished documentary *It's All True*, but then after those uncredited writing adventures, joined the Army. As a lieutenant in the 2nd Battalion of U.S. Rangers, he participated in D-Day. While leading a reconnaissance patrol, his platoon was ambushed by German machine gun nests. Meltzer died on August 21, 1944.

The prestigious Robert Meltzer Award was subsequently presented four times, then discontinued for 40 years. The Guild was forced to mothball the award when Meltzer's name got mentioned during a hearing. HUAC posthumously blacklisted Meltzer, boasting that another red would never work in this town again.

"Posthumously blacklisted?"

"A touch of evil, Trumbo style. Read about it in our Blacklist issue. It's a story that deserves repeating." — Richard Stayton, Editor

The Collection of the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, provided additional materials for this WRITTEN BY.



PUBLICATION STAFF

Editor in Chief Richard Stayton Managing Editor Creative Director Ron S. Tammariello

Contributing Editors

Christina McBride

Sandra Berg, Paul Brownfield, Louise Farr, David Gritten, Joanne Lammers, Mark Lee, Susan Littwin, Lisa Rosen

Editorial Offices

7000 W. Third Street, Los Angeles, CA 90048
TEL 323.782.4522; FAX 323.782.4802
E-MAIL writtenby@wga.org
Toll-Free Subscription Line
888.WRITNBY

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATION

KYMBER ALLEN, Advertising Sales

7000 W. Third Street, Los Angeles, CA 90048
E-MAIL kymberallen@wga.org
TEL o: 323.285.0080 c: 310.467.0705 FAX 323.782.4802

EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Peter Barsocchini, Steve Chivers, F.X. Feeney, Georgia Jeffries, Peter Lefcourt (chair), Glen Mazzara, Margaret Nagle, Margaret Oberman, Rosanne Welch

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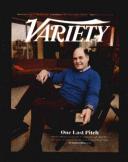
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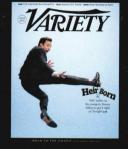


























3rd & Fairfax The Clubhouse Podcast

Searching for a strong screenwriting community? You'll find it at 3rd & Fairfax: The WGA Podcast. Inspired by active Guild members and led by the WGA board, new episodes are now released on the second and fourth Thursday of every month. The WGAW podcast is the creation of Steve Trautmann and Aaron Fullerton, members who wanted to explore the writer's lifestyle and craft with access that only the Guild could provide.

"While on hiatus from my show this year, I was able to give more attention to the activities at the WGA,



and I realized how much valuable information I had been missing," say Fullerton. "We're excited to help inform and engage the membership as to what's going on with the Guild."

More than an audio newsletter, the podcast helps screenwriters learn from each other, find shared goals, and engage the industry with insight. And because 3rd & Fairfax is available to anyone, we can now broadcast the screenwriter's perspective worldwide.

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FEATURING INTERVIEWS WITH
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"We need to get our collective voice to the public on a regular basis," says Trautmann, "not just every few years when the AMPTP offers a deal."

Each podcast includes entertaining conversations between writers, behind-the-scenes looks at Guild operations, and essential WGAW updates. Upcoming episodes will delve into digital media discussions and rare interviews unearthed from Guild archives. The convenient audio-only format allows listening on the go, perfect for the multitasking writer. By bringing Guild events and stories directly to the member, you can now step into the community clubhouse anytime and anywhere.

Subscribe to 3rd & Fairfax now via iTunes or Stitcher and the podcasts will download automatically to your computer or phone. Or listen directly from the WGA. org homepage. Have a podcast suggestion? Write to hosts Trautmann and Fullerton at podcast@wga.org.

GETTING THE STORY

For 21 years, the Austin Film Festival has brought together professional and amateur screenwriters, with year-round programming dedicated to "recognizing and celebrating the art and impact of storytelling."

Every fall, the festival is packed with industry professionals, a wealth of panels and talks, and events that bring together the best and brightest from film and television, from studio screenwriting to independent filmmaking, from Oscar winners to fresh-faced newbies.

On Story, the official Austin Film Festival podcast, now gives listeners a front-row seat to the whole festival experience. It started as a television program in 2011, airing on KLRU, the Austin PBS channel, then expanded to more than 150 PBS affiliates throughout the country. The show's content is derived from recordings of panels, events, and Q&As, going back to the festival's earliest days.

There's even a book. *On Story: Screenwriters and Their Craft* is published by the University of Texas Press and compiles the best material from the show.

With the podcast, listeners have access to great sessions with a range of episode subjects, including the serialized storytelling of recent limited series such as *Fargo* and *True Detective* and Michelle Ashford's experience exploring the history of sex research on Showtime's *Masters of Sex*.

On the film side, screenwriting couple Rick Jaffa and Amanda Silver visited the festival to discuss crafting such smart, contemporary blockbuster films as *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*. Oscarnominee Craig Borten stopped by to share the riveting journey of *Dallas Buyers Club* to the screen.

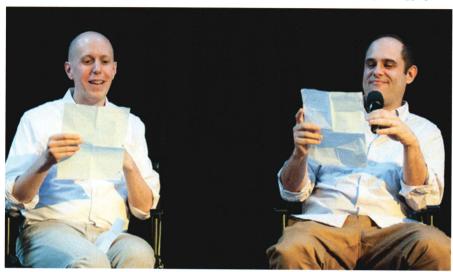
And one recent episode brought together Judd Apatow, Harold Ramis, Buck Henry, and Larry Wilmore for a deep (and hilarious) discussion of comedy.

It all adds up to one big masterclass with some amazing guest lecturers—Jay Duplass, Ed Solomon, Whit Stillman, and Jenji Kohan, to name just a few more—sharing their knowledge and experience in memorable discussions about the art of telling stories, from a leading film festival.

—Matt Hoey

THE ODD COUPLE

In a notoriously competitive industry, Craig Mazin and John August are outliers. Rather than being gatekeepers guarding hard-earned lessons, the "It's nice to have a break from writing and have a real conversation about screenwriterly things with a friend every week," Mazin says. "Blogging is



two act as benevolent mentors on their weekly podcast *Scriptnotes*, sharing copious amounts of practical information, esoteric musings, and firsthand knowledge—all for free.

Covering everything from the craft and the business to breaking through blocks and starting, August and Mazin consider their podcast to be a "hangout show." The self-proclaimed dorks genuinely enjoy talking to one another, while lucky listeners eavesdrop on their *Odd Couple* chemistry: August is fastidious, industrious, and methodical; Mazin, affable and wise-cracking. Consider it "Car Talk for screenwriters." With a straightforward, nononsense approach, they advocate old-fashioned hard work.

"It's all well and good to listen to their podcast," says August. "But at a certain point you just have to move out here [to Los Angeles] and do it."

August and Mazin were avid bloggers themselves before switching to podcasting. "Blogging is a lonely endeavor," August realized after founding his JohnAugust.com in 2003. "A blog is essentially a monologue. It's been rewarding to have a dialogue each week."

Mazin was most active on his site, TheArtful-Writer.com, during the writers' strike of 2007-2008. He lost his passion for blogging because it's writing that ends up feeling like unpaid work. exhausting, and podcasting is invigorating."

They launched *Scriptnotes* in August 2011 and have since produced nearly 200 episodes for their loyal followers, averaging 50,000 downloads per episode. (To Mazin, that number translates into a listener-filled Yankee Stadium.)

When they veer off course and segue into arcane topics, August acts as the ships' captain, gently steering their talk back to the original idea. "It's like writing dialogue live," he says. "I'm aware that the clock is ticking. I need to get back to that point, otherwise we are going to lose that thread completely. It's like making live radio theater on the fly." Striking a delicate balance of pragmatism, humor, and refreshing honesty, they share a treasure trove to their audience of both aspiring and established scribes. The duo regularly receive fan mail from listeners who share success stories such as selling a script or landing a gig.

They freely admit that podcasting is another elaborate form of procrastination. But, Mazin says, the hour he spends doing the podcast gives him a sense of accomplishment: "I feel like I actually achieved something that's tangible. When I finish a podcast I feel like we've done something good and had fun."

—Hope K. Moore

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I certify that all information is true and complete. Signed: Christina McBride Managing Editor 8/14/2015

My Breakthrough Script

In the midst of her third season of *Masters of Sex,* Michelle Ashford looks back at *The Money Shot,* an unproduced HBO pilot.

I started reading TV scripts. I thought, How hard can that be? Finally, I was working on what became the last season of Cagney & Lacey, and I decided I'm going to write a Cagney & Lacey. I had to quit my job because it was hard and time-consuming and I couldn't get the writing done. It took me forever. I thought, How do people do this?

After a few years of being on writing staffs at Fox and CBS, I realized that if I was going to work that hard, I wanted to do it for a series I created. So I started writing pilots. At the time, writing pilots was similar to a feature writer's life. You got to create new worlds out of whole cloth. You found a story, created the characters, structured it —and then you delivered the script. Usually, nothing happened. But if the executives liked the writing, they continued to hire you. I made a pretty good living writing pilots.

At that point of my career, having only written for networks, I had become increasingly frustrated with the level of critique. I would turn in a piece of material, and when the notes came back, I often felt, Well, these notes make the script dumber. I kept having this sensation and thought, This is just a drag. I was feeling that I didn't get to stretch as a writer. I didn't get to teach myself to be a better writer.

Two things happened: *The Sopranos* and *Band of Brothers*. As I watched those shows, I felt, *This is what you can do in television*. I made a vow that I would escape network television and write the next HBO miniseries. It was just a lightbulb going off in terms of recognizing material. It felt so much more comfortable: *This is who I am. This is the kind of stuff I want to be writing*.

At that time there was a *Rolling Stone* piece about the world of pornography out in the Valley. An exhaustive exposé of that world. *This is it, this is the next thing that HBO will put on.*

I remember sitting in the lobby of the HBO headquarters in Century City, and it was like a kid's first trip to Disneyland. I was looking at those letters on the wall: H-B-O. I was aflutter: Oh, my gosh, this is it, I've arrived, I'm here to pitch an idea to HBO.

I pitched to Carolyn Strauss—and they bought the pitch. It was amazing. That led to a year or so of development. The script page I'm sharing is from the final version of what I called *The Money Shot*. We went through many iterations as we considered how to approach the material. Carolyn was queasy about this world and about the best way to tell the story: Whose point of view was it?

Finally, we hit upon the idea: What if it's a daughter's point of view? One of the bizarre things about the porn world is that the big companies in the Valley are run by families, like soccer moms driving Suburbans. It's a bizarre, bizarre confluence of worlds out there. The idea that you could tell it from a

kid's point of view would completely turn the idea on its ear. It won't be what you think it is.

When I first considered the story and the script, I approached it in a much more traditional form, similar to the way we're telling the story of Masters and Johnson in *Masters of Sex.* Nudged by the network, especially by Carolyn who was looking for a way into the world that wasn't just going to resemble *Boogie Nights*, I experimented with different modes of time and form.

I decided to reimagine the story in the most inventive, strange, and interesting way—give it a mosaic quality. What was remarkable about the process is that it absolutely answered the question that was most troubling me in my career up to that point: I just didn't feel like I was pushing myself hard enough. On that script, I pushed by digging in over and over again, by trying to find the most unexpected, the most unusual way to tell this story.

How can you tell it visually? How can you tell it by moving back and forth in time? The story forced me to do it because I felt I was on shaky ground in getting it picked up. I could see that there was some resistance to the arena. I thought, Well, if I make it as compelling a piece of writing as I can, maybe they'll find it irresistible.

After a long development process, Carolyn Strauss finally said, "As a woman, as a feminist, I just cannot sanction the notion of putting on a show about pornography. I know it will be a thoughtful examination of the world, but somehow it will be contributing to the problem." So it died as a project.

I selected *The Money Shot* [for Written By] because the script completely changed my career. From then on, every time I wanted a job in cable, despite having only network experience, I would show that script, and they would say, "Okay, fine, she can write that kind of material." I never looked back from that script.

Let me close with a few words of advice: If you want to write for television, the best way to get your foot in the door is get an assistant position as close to the writers of an actual show as possible. A writer's PA is a start. Being the assistant to a writer on staff is good. Even better is becoming the assistant to the showrunner.

But if you want to learn to write, the best job is being the writers' room assistant. That's the person who sits in the writers' room every day and takes notes as the writers go about the day-to-day business of coming up with ideas, breaking stories, revising stories, and revising written material as it comes in. Nothing beats that job for learning how to write.

But people now make their way in television so differently from when I started. In a weird way, it's harder to get in at a bottom level. TV has exploded, but it has exploded in a way that everyone is running around looking for showrunners.

Now if you write a script that people respond to, they'll not only pick it up, they'll say, "Your show's on the air." And then people who have no idea of what's going on in terms of what it takes to actually produce television—that's a whole other can of worms.

When I started, it was much more organized. Now it's just the Wild West.

FADE IN:

CLOSE ON - A GRAINY IMAGE

Of... something. Hard to say what exactly. The image SHIFTS. The SOUND of muffled BREATHS. We PULL BACK to reveal

A TANGLE OF BODIES

Naked. Clearly having sex. A guy's bare ass. A couple pairs of breasts. Which part belongs to whom is apparently beside the point. PULL BACK further to reveal the bodies on a TV screen. The TV in a darkened room.

INT. A MODEST DUPLEX - SHERMAN OAKS, CALIFORNIA - NIGHT

A FIGURE. Plopped on the couch. One hand on a beer, the other in a bag of pretzels. Assume it's A GUY. The EYES stare at the provocative images, a reward after another uneventful day.

The rhythmic SLAP of flesh against flesh. Then a female VOICE. Clear. Matter-of-fact. Slightly weary. This is ZOE.

You're lonely. You're horny. So. You rent a video. Order pay-per-view. Surf the Net. You need an image. A visual. Something to trick your brain.

The EYES shift slightly. We hear the sound of a ZIPPER.

ZOE (V.O.) (cont'd) (CONT'D) This is porn's job. And it delivers.

GUY
(a low whisper)
Yeah, baby. That's right.

ZOE (V.O.)
But porn can't do everything.
Imagination has to seal the deal.
Deliver a fantasy. And in your
fantasy, it's gotta be you screwing
that girl on the video.

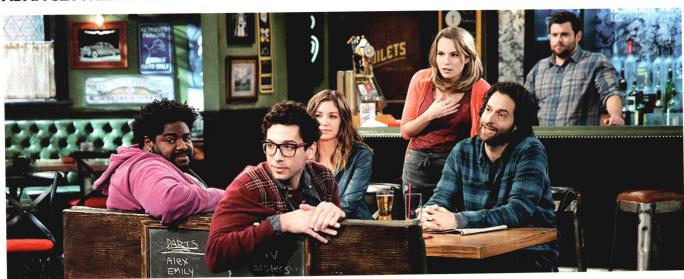
The guy MOANS. The unmistakable sound of arousal.

You getting the blowjob of the century.

Oh, yeah. You want it.

Writer Waks Into a Bar

ADAM SZTYKIEL HAS AN ENTIRE SEASON OF LIVE COMEDY ON TAP FOR UNDATEABLE.

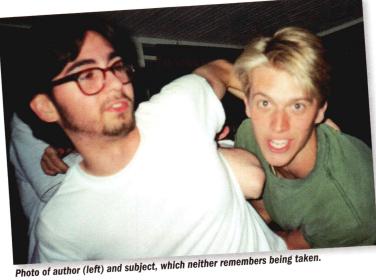


t's a strange experience to tune into a half-hour comedy on network television and literally see your life flash before your eyes.

But that's what happened with NBC's Undateable, not only because I'm well-acquainted with the person whose name appears in the credits under "Created by," but also because we spent years providing some of the raw material for the show's four friends, riffing and joking around the bar one of them owns.

Undateable is feature writer Adam Sztykiel's first series. His first time in a writers' room. And his first time working alongside a TV legend, Bill Lawrence. Another first? When the show returns for its third season on October 9, it will air all of its 13 episodes live each week.

Sztykiel met Lawrence and his producing partner, Jeff Ingold, when they were seeking a writer for an idea they'd sold



to NBC based on the book, Undateable: 311 Things Guys Do That Guarantee They Won't Be Dating or Having Sex by Ellen Rakieten and Anne Coyle. It's a humorous guide for women looking to avoid the numerous Mr. Wrongs in the world.

In Undateable, Sztykiel saw two opportunities. One, to create the kind of show he'd loved growing up, traditional multicamera shows shot in front of a live audience. Second, there was the opportunity to explore personal experiences.

The decision to do a multicamera show bucked the more recent trend of single-camera, half-hour comedies. "The first show Bill created was Spin City, which was a multicamera show, and NBC was excited to get back into the multicamera format," Sztykiel explains. "It's the show I loved the most and felt the most comfortable writing. There's something about a multicamera show that feels like comfort food to me. I can sit down and watch Cheers or Friends or NewsRadio or Family Ties—any of those shows that were on when I was younger and fall right in. They still hold up; the jokes are still solid. That's the kind of show we all wanted to do."

Veering from the source material, they wanted something more personal, and hopefully, universal. "We wanted a show where Undateable was a catch-all for people going through transitional phases, still figuring things out. A coming-of-age story about a group of friends."

Writing Undateable allowed Sztykiel to revisit his own history, when he was going through the same transitions as these characters. The first thing he did was open up about his life.

"I brought in pictures from when you and I and the other guys lived together when we were in our 20s. This was the parallel to the book, just how much we didn't get it."

I'm not sure I like where this is headed.

UNDATEABLE - 201 Shooting Draft (Blue)
"A Japanese Businessman Walks Into A Bar"

32. III-L

DANNY (CONT'D)

I say let the people decide. (BOTTLE GAVEL) This court is now in session, Justin Kearney versus Danny Burton.

JUSTIN

Nobody wants to do your fake trial.

SHELLY

Oh, I'd love a new character to get lost in. I'll be the tough judge who says things like, "I'll allow it, but you're on thin ice, counselor."

BURSKI

I want to be the Southern lawyer who dabs his forehead a lot. (DOES IT)

Now, uh, so, on the night, of... uh...

DANNY

Okay, Burski you're going to be the silent bailiff who never ever speaks. Brett, you're the court reporter. Now let's get this trial going. Unless you're scared, counselor.

JUSTIN

Fine, you want to play? Surprise,
Danny, I was captain of my college
debate team.

DANNY

That's not a surprise, nerd.

"The weirdest thing about 'my' process is that as we write, or rewrite, I will stand in front of the monitor on the wall—like a foot away—and read out loud to myself, sort of mumbling, doing my best to approximate the voice of the characters," says Adam Sztykiel. "I try to do that less now. I'm sure it's tiresome watching my sad, one-man-show version of a scene."

"I had frosted tips and you had a puka shell necklace and Birkenstocks with socks."

Not cool, bro. Not cool.

"You look at that picture and you're like, *Thank god those guys have each other.*"

His willingness to share made the other writers comfortable sharing their stories.

"Everybody has told some story that's so painfully embarrassing, an awkward relationship story or something with friends or a roommate," Sztykiel adds. "You'll be ridiculed, but it's a completely safe space. It would never go beyond there. Everyone loves you in spite of whatever bad, embarrassing things you've done."

Learning on the Job

There's actually a third significant opportunity Sztykiel found with the show: the chance to work side-by-side with executive producer Bill Lawrence, running the show and the writers' room. Even after two seasons, he never loses sight of this good fortune. "Bill, who is responsible for Cougar Town and Scrubs and Clone High and Spin City, that he created with Gary David Goldberg, who's responsible for Family Ties, among other things," Sztykiel says. "I have television history, dating all the way back to when I was a kid, right here. Not only am I getting Bill's 20 years, 500 episodes of TV experience, but I'm also getting his mentor's knowledge and experience. Which is pretty crazy, considering I had never done a TV show."

His biggest inspiration from Lawrence? "The level of rigor that gets applied to every step," Sztykiel reveals. "I tend to be impulsive. I get an idea and go with it and if it doesn't work I'll figure it out along the way. Working with Bill, you learn that can become costly when you get too far down the road and realize you've gone down the wrong one. He takes time to think about and weigh all the story and character decisions. It's like



Adam Sztykiel and his infant daughter on the set of Undateable.

watching an athlete who's played so many games and seen every scenario. It would take me 10 times as long to arrive at the same note he arrives at instantaneously."

There's another benefit to having him around—especially as a comedy writer. "He's an easy laugh," says Sztykiel. "Nobody loves comedy or jokes or comedians more than him. I'm convinced that's why he still does this, just to be around those types of people."

But pitch an idea that makes Lawrence stop throwing his Nerf football in the air and admit it's something he hasn't seen before, then you're getting somewhere.

In 3, 2, 1...

During Season 2, NBC approached them about doing one live episode. As a multicamera show, with storylines that mostly unfold in two primary locations, a bar and a house, *Undateable* was a prime candidate for this experiment.

Except: "Bill and I, combined, having done zero episodes of live television, we said, 'Sure, 100 percent we can do that."

To set it apart from other episodes, the one-hour live show featured celebrity cameos, musical performances from Ed Sheeran, and characters breaking the fourth wall. "Because it was the only one, we took a lot of liberties with the self-aware, meta, winks to the camera stuff," he recalls. "It's different and something I hadn't seen a lot. In a TV landscape where there's nine zillion channels and you're competing for fewer and fewer eyeballs, anything you can do to get people excited about your show is a good thing."

But when NBC brought up an entire live season, Sztykiel knew their approach would shift. "You can't do a whole season like that. At the same time, we're going to preserve what makes the show unique in a live experience, and not just a novelty act, whether that's live music or topical jokes or throwing the guys different lines on the spot."

It doesn't hurt that the show's four main performers—Chris D'Elia, Brent Morin, Ron Funches, and Rick Glassman—are all stand-ups. However, it's not even this skill set that's most important to Sztykiel. While casting, they discovered these four had a history. They'd toured together, lived together, been friends for years in some cases.

"There's nothing you could ever do that would give you the value *that* gives you. We try to let their real personalities and real relationships come through. In

the pilot, once we cast the show, we rewrote the script completely, specifically honing the characters to their voices."

Speaking from experience, he adds, "A group of friends is a traveling comedy show. That's every day we get these guys on set. Half the stuff we're rewriting is because by the time we see these guys putting it up on its feet, they've found 10 new jokes. Yes, because they're all standups, but also because they're all buddies."

Their natural comedic abilities and improv skills often lead to spontaneous riffs, like a fight performed by two characters as competing weathermen, reporting on a hurricane.

"It was a scripted joke two couplets long that would've occupied 20 seconds of screen time," Sztykiel explains. "On show night, they turned it into a six-minute bit."

Headed into the live season, he wonders, "How do you make room for those runs, but also make sure they don't occupy a third of your show? I'm hoping during rehearsal we find that stuff, to make space so they can go back and forth on show night."

Writing a live season means heading into uncharted waters. Consider that an episode taping might last four hours, followed by hours or days in the editing room. "When we tape, we have time to edit, to get down to time," Sztykiel says. "We essentially have to do that work before we shoot. There will be a challenge in telling full stories in a live-show format, but we're still going to do the same type of stories, carry storylines through the season. The scripts will have to be tight. The actors will need to have them memorized. And they have to be tight, time-wise, because you have 21-and-a-half minutes to tell your story and you can't go over."

They went to work in the summer, opening the writers' room earlier than in previous seasons. "To figure out what a typical live half-hour episode will look like," he adds. "Do we want to have live music? How aware are we of being live? What do we want the show to be? That first month was finding that sweet spot between exploiting what's cool about a live show, while still doing what we've loved about the first two seasons."

Fitting In

As a screenwriter, with credits on such films as *Due Date* and *Made of Honor*, Sztykiel was accustomed to a quiet, lonely desk and a blank screen. Figuring out how to write in collaboration, how to work in a group, was an adjustment—especially with comedy.

"When you're by yourself, you'll write something and be like, *That's funny*," Sztykiel says. "In the room, you know immediately whether it gets a laugh or not."

In addition to Sztykiel and Lawrence, there is a deep bench of talent with a variety of experience on the show's writing staff (deep breath): Craig Doyle, Heather Flanders, Mike Hobert, Austen Faggen, Joel Church-Cooper, Laura Mora, Jon DeWalt, Allison Bosma, Chris Luccy, Seth Cohen, Amy Pocha, Matt Hausfater, Terrell Lawrence, and Neal Cornell.

"The staff is bigger this year," Sztykiel says. "As we get into production, having that larger staff will become invaluable so we can be running a few rooms—punching up next week's script, prepping the one after that, putting together outlines and scripts for the end of the season. I like having a large staff—more smart, funny people to beat jokes and troubleshoot story issues."



They come from many different show backgrounds, contributing to Sztykiel finding his footing in this world, developing his own style and approach. "I am always interested in hearing how other shows or rooms are run. I'll steal anything that would make our show better and more efficient."

He acknowledges he's still learning and open to any advice. "The weirdest thing someone pointed out about 'my' process is that as we write, or rewrite, I will stand in front of the monitor on the wall—like a foot away—and read out loud to myself, sort of mumbling, doing my best to approximate the voice of the characters." He admits, "I try to do that less now. I'm sure it's tiresome watching my sad, one-manshow version of a scene."

It's Alive!

Moving forward, headed into the show's first live season, he's still looking back, as again his personal experiences come into play. "It essentially takes me back to producing plays in high school," he says. "Find the funniest people, write joke-heavy material. Whenever we did those shows, it was either going to be explosively awesome or an epic disaster."

Sztykiel's referring to our landmark high school production, *Sabotage*, an homage to the Beastie Boys video of the same name, done in the style of a fictional 1970s cop series. It was a 25-minute one-act comprised of 17 locations and 25 speaking parts.

"I'd also like to point out that our shared experience of writing for a live audience goes all the way back to hosting the eighth-grade drama show as Wayne and Garth," he adds.

It's true. We portrayed those *SNL* stalwarts with original material (some prominent catchphrases notwithstanding). In other words, he's been preparing most of his life for this. That doesn't mean he isn't nervous. When asked how ready they'll be when cameras roll for the first live show, he demurs to answer.

"I feel like I'd tell you and then there'd be a hard cut to October 9, and we're like, *We have no scripts.*" He laughs. "Which would never happen, by the way, if anyone from Warner Bros. or NBC is reading this. We would never let that happen."

Something tells me he'll be fine. There's still years of embarrassing, awkward experiences to mine for storylines.

Wait. I'm not sure I like where this is headed. WB

Queer Eye for the Straight Guys

ALI ADLER GIVES MEN A HAND, FOR THE LOVE OF WOMEN.

li Adler wants to help mankind. Get laid. And she wants womenkind to get laid better. The advice she dispenses in her book, *How to F*ck a Woman*, is by turns vulgar, hilarious, direct, and G-spot on. And it's all thanks to the writers' room.

Adler is a longtime television writer. "Long, long time," she says by phone the day after starting prep on her latest show, *Supergirl*. In addition to stints on *Glee, Chuck*, and *Family Guy*, "I'm the writer who brought you the *Beverly Hills*, 90210 that was called 'Euphoria." Throughout those years, she has been in plenty of rooms where she was the only woman, or maybe one of two. As a result, she's heard many tales of female conquest that made her roll her eyes, shake her head, and finally put her foot down.

"I was having conversations one-on-one, bossily," Adler remembers, "but for their own good, and then it was, *How do I reach more of you people, and also the women that need your understanding?* Moments of frustration of not being known and wanting to speak for women everywhere. That dry erase board moment [from the introduction; see sidebar] was me wanting to connect with those 10 guys, and then thinking, *There's a more efficient way of distributing this information.*"

True to format, she initially thought of the project as a screenplay, picturing "this big, strong, overarching female character, like a hot sexy gay woman, who meets a Jonah Hill-type who doesn't get it. She rights him on the path to finding love. It

HOW TO

WOMAN

* An Insider's Guide to Love & Relationships

seemed like a great idea, but my voice kept getting bigger and stronger, and that overtook the screenplay."

She notes in the book that, as a lesbian, she has intimate knowledge of women's psyches and bodies from all angles. So for the love of god, heed her counsel. For instance, concerning dick pics: DON'T SEND THEM. "These are of course generalities—I say genderalities. The truth is, I'm sure there are many women aroused by the physical form. But I wouldn't say that's a thing they like upon first blush. Men tend to do what they like done to

them. So if you're getting a pic of a dick, that means they want you to send a pic of your own private area. And, as we learn in the book, it's not always what they want that you want."

Women, they're sexually different from men! That shouldn't



be a revelation, should it? "I hate to be tapping them on the shoulder in 2015, but I do think there are some facts to share."

As often as she takes men to task for their dunderheadedness, she also reveals her share of girl-code secrets. For instance: Women talk. A lot. About feelings and shit, and it can be boring as hell. And here's the thing, men: You don't even have to really listen to women go on and on about their day. You can just pretend. At least at first, "until the muscle develops to actually listen," Adler says. "When you go to the gym it hurts, it's horrible—then a couple weeks later you see muscle. If you keep doing it, an action has a reaction. If you pretend to listen long enough, you will soon find that you have listened. That will help you connect."

Until men actually enjoy listening?

She hesitates. Well... "I think that's going pretty far. But it will help you know your partner, which will ultimately get you the fucking you want. It is fair to say that listening does bring connection. Men might not like to talk as much, but they do like to connect in their own way, so it is a reciprocal thing. Ultimately, it's selfish to listen."

The Bait and Switch

Adler reveals her own private areas as well, at least emotionally. Presently engaged, she has two children from her previous partner, actress Sara Gilbert, and discusses in the book the dissolution of that relationship, even referring to her ex by name. "I tacked an H on at the end," she says, and laughs. "She was fine with it."

She brings up that relationship as cautionary tale for her

readers. "Every fight we ever have, we each have 100 percent responsibility for 50 percent," she says. "I was promised no math in writing, but that is the math that I give you. We're always quick to blame, but the best way to change yourself is accepting full responsibility for how you got there. However Sara and I didn't work out, we were very helpful in teaching each other this lesson about our own journey."

For all its explicit instruction (and there's plenty of it, but if you skip to that chapter she will chastise you: "That's what guys do all the time, skip the emotional foreplay"), the book's really about finding and nurturing a healthy relationship. Because if you can do that, you'll get all the sex you want. And it'll be much better sex.

"My daughter saw some advanced mock-up of the book cover, and I don't normally say those kinds of words in front of my kids, so she was like, 'What does this mean?' And I sort of explained that it's a guide on how to know the opposite gender in all ways. She said, 'Oh, so it could be called, How to Treat a Woman.' And I said yes. I didn't say this conversation to her, but it's a grabby title like the spoonful of sugar, it gets them in the door. If the title was *How to Be a Better Partner*. or How to Treat a Woman, it isn't as interesting a banner. But yes, the point is to get everyone connected and to point out our similarities. It's really a guide to love."

How's that for a plot twist.

The book-writing process itself was revelatory to her, after coming from the collaborative world of TV writing. "I'm so used to what's the story, what's the theme, getting a beat sheet, getting notes on a beat sheet, then an outline form, getting notes on the outline, going to draft, and getting notes on a draft. What was amazing with my editors at Weinstein was that I wrote up a book proposal, and they bought it, and I said, 'Okay, what would you like me to lean into?' Looking for that network direction. They said, 'Yeah, do that again for 60,000 words.'"

No outline. No notes.

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The idea for this book came to me while I was a writer for a half-hour TV show. Often, these comedy rooms (the "writers' room") are a bastion of boys wearing hoodies in various states of elbow-holed disrepair. Testosterone, fear, competitive eating games, and flatulence fill the air.

Ali Adler applied what she learned from writing *How to F*ck a Woman* to *Supergirl*. Connecting with her own vulnerability on the page helped Adler connect with Supergirl's vulnerability and her newfound power in the world. But she is quick to note that the CBS family show has nothing to do with the better-sex manual in any other way.

These types of rooms are all basically the same. An old conference table coated with SunChip- (née potato chip-) greasy fingerprints and ghosts of old jokes ("Frasier, your girlfriend is as young as this Beaujolais!"). The room has been repainted so many times, it's exponentially smaller because of it. Lots of guys sitting around in Dockers and pocket T-shirts, wholly unaware of any changes in fashion in the past decade, stuck in a time-bubble from before Banana Republic used gay-boys to do their ads.

I'm usually the only female writer (maybe one of a few) in a room filled with a dozen people. And I have a very privileged window into a world that most wom-

en don't get to absorb. I sit with them, and we all share the most intimate details of our lives. Invariably these rooms devolve into discussions of when was the last time you had sex, who you did it with, whose wife/girlfriend allows them rear privilege, and how much would you have to be paid to eat out the bunghole of the pot-bellied location scout. ("Did Gary bathe recently?" "How long would I have to eat it for?" "Does eating Gary's asshole make me gay, or just a whore?" "Do I have to get him off with my hand, or would he do it himself?" "Tax-wise, do I have to declare this as income, or would it come in bricks of cash in a shoebox?") Conversations that don't usually come up at work.

At some point in this decadent unproductive soup, the boys ask me to share every single sexual experience I've ever had. ("Because of two pussies!") One show I worked on made this a regular thing. They asked me to regale them every Friday. Like a library story-time for pervy dudes who missed out on sex in their teens because they were studying for their SATs. They called it "Lesbian Fridays," and they pined for it with the same kind of longing they had for dim-sum dumplings. Which, not so coincidentally. were also delivered on Fridays.

One of them always played moderator for this weekly occurrence of the discussion of my sexual escapades. He was like a no-sock-wearing, bespectacled, Jewish hipster Charlie Rose. One day, right before Christmas break, another one of the guys chimed in and offered a morsel about his own sexual prowess regarding his brand new bride: "Last night, I fucked her hard. Played with her clit—" And then I watched as he pantomimed his accompany-

continues on page 17

"That was the most liberating and terrifying journey. It's swimming from one side of a lake to the other. You're not quite sure where the other side is; you just have to keep swimming. It was exciting and amazing after so many years of network and studio guardrails to just feel what your voice is. A day could take you anywhere. Your mind was your only network note."

Her daily routine changed drastically. "My journey was getting up, getting coffee, shuffling into my office wearing slippers," trying to figure out where to swim to that day. "TV is collaborative in a great way and also in a way that stops you from

getting specific, and stops you from taking a tributary journey." She ended up finding her voice: brash, dirty, loving, and poignant. She describes herself as "a porcupine covered in caramel. It's like Kat Grant meets Supergirl."

Wait, who?

Super Women

Right after Adler started working on the book, Greg Berlanti called to ask what she knew about the DC character *Supergirl*. She'd loved comics since she was a kid and had some experience with the genre, although she wasn't an expert. Then again, she told him, "I *am* Supergirl." That's all Berlanti needed to hear.

Adler developed *Supergirl* (based on previously existing material) with Berlanti and Andrew Kreisberg, applying what she had learned from writing the book. Connecting with her own vulnerability on the page helped her connect with her character's vulnerability and her newfound power in the world. Adler is quick to note that the CBS family show has nothing to do with the better-sex manual in any other way. "They have strong powerful women at the center; that's the only thing they have in common. What's exciting is having gotten more into an empowered voice."

Supergirl premieres October 20, but the pilot was made available early. The series tells the tale of Kara Zor-El, Superman's cousin. Having hidden her powers until age 24, Zor-El decides to embrace them for the good of humankind. As mild-mannered Kara Danvers, she works for a megalomania-cal media titan, the aforementioned Kat Grant. But as Supergirl, she kicks ass.

Adler's previous TV experience figures in as well, especially the genre shows *Chuck* and *No Ordinary Family*. The latter was created by Berlanti and featured a family of superheroes. She's also written a lot of comedy, co-creating *The New Normal* with Ryan Murphy, and a beloved but brief stint on *Family Guy* before its (first) cancellation. "That was so thrilling. Seth Mac-Farlane is one of the true geniuses. It was a privilege being in a room with him and the many brilliant writers every day; it

"Superman flies alone, he's always done it by himself, whether he's had Jimmy Olsens or Lois Lanes to be his ground support. What's different for us about Supergirl is that she doesn't feel bad about asking for help. She knows she can't do it alone, and she's stronger with them."

taught me to be boundary-less."

With *Supergirl*, she's combining the action, the drama, and the comedy. "It's been a long time in the kitchen preparing, hopefully, this satisfying meal."

A number of female executives championed the show from the beginning. "It's a woman-charged studio—with Peter Roth at Warner Bros., there's Susan Rovner and Clancy Collins White. Then at CBS, Nina Tassler has been so thrilled and excited. The first time we pitched it, I don't know if she'll admit to this, but she cried during the pitch. To me, that's so powerful, to show your vulnerability. She bought it to series in that moment."

Adler's not the sole woman in her writers' room. At *Supergirl*, "It's an amazing staff of people with vast and varied experiences, very down-the-middle gender-wise, and that's great. There's nothing more gender-blind than a piece of paper with words on it. We did look for the best candidates on the page, and then we'd meet the best people, and it just broke down this way. It's a tremendous staff, a lot of experience and some new voices, and just really cool people that represent all the things about *Supergirl* that's interesting, the genre and the comedy and the action."

In the pilot, Kara squares off with her boss Kat Grant for giving the name Supergirl to the new hero-above-town; the two fight over whether the moniker is sexist and belittling. Adler points out that they're going for the "light and true" tone of the Christopher Reeve–Richard Donner *Superman* movies, "where it should feel very real. All the questions that you're asking at home, we want to ask here."

In a departure from Superman's tale, several trusted people know about Kara's secret even before she assumes the cape. Like another supergirl before her, she's not doing battle alone. "We certainly talk about Buffy a lot here," she says, referencing the star of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, who had a crew, nicknamed the Scooby Gang, that helped her fight off immortal baddies.

"Between you and me, that's very much a product of being a woman," Adler says. "Looking around and seeing where your strengths and deficits lie and then asking for help. That's something we hope to achieve in the series. Superman flies alone; he's always done it by himself, whether he's had Jimmy Olsens or Lois Lanes to be his ground support. What's different for us about Supergirl is that she doesn't feel bad about asking for help. She knows she can't do it alone, and she's stronger with them."

Adler feels the same way. Since Berlanti and Kreisberg are also working on just about every other show on television, Adler runs the room. (Berlanti: *The Flash, Arrow, The Mysteries of Laura, Blindspot, DC's Legends of Tomorrow*. Kreisberg: *Arrow, Flash, Legends*.) But, she adds, "Greg and Andrew are very much involved in the day-to-day; it's absolutely a collaboration. It's like Supergirl—too big a job to do alone. I need the Scooby Gang."

ing action. It looked like he was rapidly flipping on and off a very loose light switch. Like the signal to come back from intermission at an amateur playhouse.

I was shocked. As a woman who has sex with women, and as a woman who receives sexual pleasure, no part of me identified with the extreme finger calisthenics that he was demonstrating. I didn't want to shame him, but this had to stop. I had to put an end to this and probably other horrific things that, I could only assume, were being perpetrated in the bedrooms of men such as this.

I brushed powdered sugar Donette crumbs from my mouth. Took a sip of Coke, swishing the fizzing brown liquid all over my teeth. I stood up, resolved to set them straighter than they already were. They wondered what was happening as I closed the door of the room. Some asshole balked: the one who always shoved a New York Times in his back pocket on his way to the men's room, literally telegraphing his impending bowel movement. "Quit wasting time," he said. "We're so close to finishing the scene." But knowing that he probably needed this information more than anyone else, I picked up a dry-erase marker.

I told them to please be quiet. I congratulated them: "You guys are at the right place at the right time." I told them they were about to receive an early holiday gift; one that I'm sure even Santa Claus needs to hear. "Trim the beard, Kringle! Lighten up on the liquor, and stop hosting children on your elderly lap!"

Then I drew a picture of a vagina on the dry-erase board. Not the funny caricatures we'd all done on this same board for years. Not an animated South Park-style vagina with funny eyes and a country-western

twang coming out of her sarcastic buck-toothed vagina-mouth.

I'm no artist, but I drew a crude rendering of what this thing really looks like; like I was inventing Braille for the blind, or a map for people who have never even heard of maps. I told these lucky men that what I was about to teach them would help them. Change things for them forever. That they should clear their cache of everything they ever thought they knew about pleasuring women. I began. I gave them step-by-step instructions on both the physical and the psychological levels of fucking ladies. A guy with too-curly black hair who went to Stanford dutifully took notes on his iPhone. I admired his courage in a roomful of professional mockers.

Later, when I opened the room up for questions, some asked specifics. You know the expression "there are no dumb questions"? ("Where does your pee come out?" "When you have your period, is it like a faucet that pours out blood?" "Why is the clit on the outside when my dick goes on the inside?") There totally are dumb questions, but I pretended otherwise. That particular writers' room usually greeted the dawn based on script deadlines. But this time, as the sun came up, these men walked into that new day fortified with something much more substantial than the hangover of poorly crafted puns.

A week later, there was a Christmas party for the show's cast and crew. Amidst the yuletide cheer and open bar, three of the writers' wives and two of their girlfriends approached me, thanking me for my frank lecture and tips. They were giggly and content, their men slightly swaggering. As I watched these couples connecting on a new level, I felt good. Proud to have

been of service. And then I was suddenly overwhelmed by the thought of the many other men out there who also needed this information.

And that's why I'm here; why I'm compelled to tell this story. Not for the thanks—but because I never knew there was such a famine of knowledge. A fucking drought of well-fucked women.

I'm not digging wells to provide clean water to African children, but this is my charity. Women shouldn't need to be gay for their vaginas to be eaten properly. They shouldn't have to give detailed, emasculating instructions, either. This body of wisdom should be like the sacred Torah, passed down from generation to generation. Studied faithfully and practiced in earnest. I want to help you to pleasure your women in a way that many of you have no clue how to do. And why would you? How could you, if someone who owns a vagina doesn't offer some helpful hints and tricks?

While I was having sex with myself or other girls, you were masturbating at a speed that's the opposite of what's good for women. So I have an advantage, and it's time to share it.

You're trying to fuck a woman; I get it. I've done it. I aim to do it again in a couple of hours. But you've got to ask yourselves, "What's my goal here?" If you're just in this to put your penis in a vagina, there's plenty of alcohol and women with low self-esteem who will probably allow you to. But I would like to get you up and fucking, and to keep doing it until it actually feels like something more than just a sexual act; something like love.

This will require a new system.

How to F*ck a Woman excerpt reprinted with permission from Weinstein Books.

The Reasons Why

Circling back to the Blacklist, looking for survivors and survival tips. Is the past even past?

he Hollywood Blacklist began almost 70 years ago; to many in what Gore Vidal called "the United States of Amnesia," it's just ancient history. Is it critical for screenwriters to remember that long ago time when dissenting filmmakers were treated like lepers? And what is the reason for the current revival of interest in one of the darkest periods in Hollywood—and arguably American—history?

The new wave of books, film series, museum shows, and plays is emerging now "because there has been so much interest in—no, controversy, surrounding our own government and the National Security Agency's policies and issues of privacy and civil liberties," suggests author Rebecca Prime. "I began my Blacklist project back in the early aughts and those issues were certainly very much under discussion in the aftermath of the Patriot Act. And we've had more recent revelations that are likewise resonant with the infringement of civil liberties from the blacklisted experience. So maybe that's in the subconscious and making people more interested."

"These things happen regularly in U.S. history," notes historian Larry Ceplair. "The Blacklist and domestic Cold War is just one of a series. You go back to the Alien and Sedition Acts [of 1798] and see that about every 20, 30 years there's some form of attack on the First Amendment and people's right to speak freely. It's important for them to know there's this trend in U.S. history.

"Secondly, screenwriters should know because they were effectively silenced by the Blacklist, by HUAC," adds Ceplair. "They were either afraid to write the kind of scripts they wanted to write or were prevented from writing the scripts they wanted to write by the studios. Screenwriters are interested in having freedom of speech—they should know that this happened... Media writers are among the most vulnerable people during suppressive eras. Thus, they must be vigilant and ready to defend their right of expression."

Ceplair goes on to say: "One reason it happened is because their own guild caved in, so as members of a writers guild it's important for them—if these things start to happen again—to stand up and resist, rather than fold. Arguably, if the three talent guilds hadn't folded in the early '50s, the Blacklist might not have been as extensive as it

was. [Screen Actors Guild president] Ronald Reagan was a friendly witness. He was also a part of the Motion Picture Industry Council, which was set up as a way of providing 'clearance' for people who wanted to be forgiven and brought back into the fold. There's no question that he and his [then] wife, Jane Wyman, were informants in the '40s... When Michael Wilson won the Laurel Award around 1975, he told the screenwriters he hoped that younger writers who hadn't lived through the period would remember it and act differently, should it occur again."

Regarding the resurgence of interest in the Blacklist, Ceplair states: "Every 20 years it happens. Back in the mid-1970s, Nancy Schwartz [The Hollywood Writers Wars], Victor Navasky, Steven Englund, and I started writing books on the Blacklist. Then there was a kind of lull period and in the'90s there was a counter-movement-Kenneth Billingsley, Ronald Radosh, and a few others began to write: 'Well, these guys were all Communists; they deserved everything they got. The Committee got it right.' Twenty years later people are rethinking the Blacklist. I think it has something to do with the fact that periodically the U.S. government becomes oppressive in terms of First Amendment issues. The Obama administration has been particularly tough on whistleblowers. When that happens, it kind of flicks a switch and people say, 'Ah, yes, remember the domestic Cold War, when there was this effort to silence people."

One of the last survivors of that era, Norma Barzman, plaintively asks: "The Blacklist was a period of spying and censorship. Who will they blacklist today? Muslims? Terrorists? It's an excuse at a time when people need to speak out against the 1%." (Note that many ISIS reports refer to the "media savvy" and "high-production values" of the group's videos and social media outreach.)

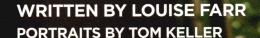
Writer-director Oliver Stone, whose 2012 10-hour, 10-part Showtime documentary series *The Untold History of the United States* covered the Red Scare, believes it's critical for storytellers to know about the Blacklist because "the concept of 'political correctness' is very much with us today. In the late 1940s/50s, to take a point of view uncritical of Communism or the Soviet Union, or sympathetic to world

D B L A C K L I S T



Rebecca Prime sums things up: "It's still a compelling subject because you don't think it would happen. That we so value our freedoms that we have living here in America. Yet this is an instance in history where those freedoms were extremely infringed upon. We're living in an age where there are other contemporary events that have likewise made situations arise. I'm thinking of our antiter-

rorist policies where our freedoms are not as protected as we think they are. It's important to remember this incredible part of our history that happened not that long ago. Screenwriters are telling America's stories, so to remember what happened to their predecessors is important to keep in mind. It's like that old adage: 'Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it.'"



Becoming Trumbo

A BLACKLIST VICTIM'S COURAGE INSPIRED JOHN McNAMARA'S BATTLE FOR TRUMBO.

t was 2011 and as John McNamara made the rounds trying to get his screenplay *Trumbo* produced, he found himself in the middle of the classic Hollywood nightmare: being "niced" and "complimented to death" by people he considered "inauthentic."

"I could not get more than the most cursory meetings," says McNamara, a man with a wild laugh and a pugnacious cast to his face, talking one late afternoon at his 1960s-chic house on the Valley side of the Santa Monica Mountains. "I remember being in the parking lot in the hot sun and going from my car to the office, meeting a young executive—who has no power—telling me how much he likes the script but he can't make it. Meeting after meeting after meeting."

McNamara left the encounters talking to himself, saying, No one's ever going to make this movie. I must have been out of my goddamn mind to write this fucking thing.

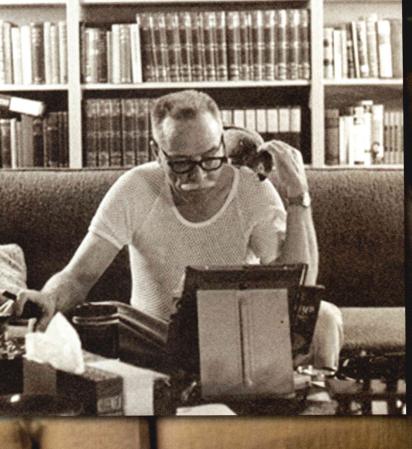
The project had begun in spring 2008, after a fruitless brainstorming session with producer Kevin Kelly Brown. McNamara had been eager to return to work after the WGA strike. But he and Brown couldn't muster workable ideas for pilots. Brown was leaving when something caught his eye. He pointed toward a bookshelf and a volume titled *Dalton Trumbo*.

"I knew him," Brown told McNamara.

"You knew Trumbo?"

No, he knew the book's late author, Bruce Cook.

McNamara filled Brown in, explaining that Trumbo was the blacklisted screenwriter who, in the 1940s, had been hauled before the House Un-American Activities Committee during its hysterical quest to weed out Hollywood communist "subversives." Despite being the highest-paid screenwriter in the business, Trumbo risked it all by refusing to answer the committee's questions. He would not discuss his personal political leanings or divulge names of friends who might be politically vulnerable. That refusal made him a pariah, landed him in federal prison, and ruined his career—until Trumbo personally took on the Blacklist, effectively ending the plague.





"I could not get more than the most cursory meetings," John McNamara says of pitching *Trumbo*. "I remember being in the parking lot in the hot sun, going from my car to the office, and meeting a young executive who has no power telling me how much he likes the script but he can't make it. Meeting, after meeting, after meeting, after meeting, after meeting, after meeting." He would leave, convinced that, *No one's ever going to make this movie. I must have been out of my goddamn mind to write this fucking thing.*

When McNamara finished, Brown said, "That's a movie." Not one to hold back, McNamara asked, "How the fuck is that a movie? Trumbo's a communist, it takes place in Hollywood, it's about politics, there's no sex, no violence—and it's a period piece."

Brown said it was still a movie. Why? Because Dalton Trumbo standing up for his beliefs against the government and studio heads was a David-and-Goliath story. It even had a happy ending when Trumbo helped break the Blacklist.

That's when McNamara did an about-face: "Oh, my God. Fuck. He's right. That night I said to my wife, 'I'm not going back to TV for a while. I'm going to take a year off and write this movie.' And she's like, 'O-kaaay."

He and Brown optioned the Bruce Cook book, and Mc-Namara, best known at the time for co-creating TV's *Profit, Vengeance Unlimited, Fastlane*, and *Spy Game*, began to write. Rather, began to *try* to write. "I wrote one draft too quickly, then I wrote a million drafts slowly. My main memory is of failing. For years."

But there was a reason that he persisted. "I think what I wanted to do was live in the skin of a man who fought battles that I would never have had the courage to fight myself."

Trumbo's Thick Skin

A Colorado-born novelist and journalist, Dalton Trumbo landed in the Warner Bros. story department in the 1930s as a reader. By 1947, he was Hollywood's most sought-after screenwriter. That same year the House Un-American Activities Committee investigative hearings took place in Washington.

Trumbo wrote the screenplays for RKO's Ginger Rogers films *Kitty Foyle* (1940), for which Rogers won an Oscar, and the 1943 *Tender Comrades*. Later, under contract to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, his credits included the Spencer Tracy mov-

ies A Guy Named Joe (1943) and 30 Seconds Over Tokyo (1944), and Our Vines Have Tender Grapes (1945), which starred Edward G. Robinson.

The prolific Trumbo was considered invaluable to the studio. His MGM agreement allowed him to reject any subject matter while staying on full salary—\$3,000 a week, with an option to switch to a \$75,000 flat rate for a script if he felt it financially worthwhile (sums roughly equivalent to \$30,000 and \$800,000 in today's money). But his inclusion in the Hollywood Ten—the group of writers, producers, and directors who flouted the communist-hunting Committee and were cited for contempt of Congress—left him unemployable.

By 1948, while trying to stave off his pending one-year sentence, he wrote to an agent, "I am broke as a bankrupt's bastard." Appeals reached all the way to the Supreme Court and failed, and in 1950 Trumbo entered the Federal Correctional Institute in Ashland, Kentucky.

Looking back, McNamara believes that another part of the struggle to translate Trumbo's story into a script had stemmed from his own success. He had written numerous thriller, detective, or superhero television shows with their clear-cut plots. Now he faced writing about an iconic writer whose conflicts were intellectual and sociological. Trumbo the legend. More than once McNamara found himself thinking, *Tom Stoppard would kill this*.

From the start, he wanted the film to end in 1970, at the annual Writers Guild Awards ceremony, when Trumbo received the Guild's Laurel Award for Screenwriting Achievement and then delivered a controversial speech absolving everyone impacted by the Blacklist—there were no villains or heroes, only victims.

But how do you get to that awards show? McNamara's numerous false starts led to serious doubts about his own talent. "If you're lucky—and I've been very lucky—you can get rewarded for mediocrity. You can get rewarded a lot. And you begin to lose sight of what is great. Is it really great to write an episodic TV show that isn't a great TV show, but your bosses all say it's great, and you're like, really?"

He lets out that laugh. "I don't want to tear myself down, but a lot of my self-doubt was around, 'Why would the guy who co-created *Spy Game* think he can write *Trumbo*?"

Self-doubt wasn't the only obstacle. Going into the project, McNamara thought that he understood the era and its politics but soon discovered that he only had a few clues. So he began delving into troves of material in the Writers Guild, Academy, and UCLA libraries, and in the Hollywood Blacklist Collections at the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research in Madison. For a year, he became absorbed in fact-finding, reading and rereading literally hundreds of Trumbo's eloquent and impassioned letters, trying to capture that voice, sending drafts off to friends for notes.

The novelist and colleague Rafael Yglesias, whose parents had been communists, helped him to understand the philosophy. But after Yglesias read an early version, he phoned McNamara to offer a significant note: "Okay, now you've erected the statue of Dalton Trumbo. It's time to get to know the man."

"One of the things that helped me a lot was that Trumbo wrote tons and tons of shitty movies," McNamara says. "He wrote some incredibly great movies in the '30s and '40s and some incredibly bad movies in the '30s and '40s, and some really bad movies in the '60s. He wrote *The Sandpiper* for God's sake. That's a terrible movie. But he wrote *Spartacus*, one of the best movies ever made, and *Lonely Are the Brave*, one of the best."

Pondering this reminded him, as he puts it, "That Trumbo and I both can be hacks." And the more he came to realize how hard Trumbo worked, how vast his output was, and how his writing "soared" when working with strong subject matter, McNamara found perspective in his own struggles: He, too, had strong subject matter. I have great material here. Stop fucking it up, stop getting in your own way.

McNamara's wife, Julie, executive VP of drama development for CBS television, says her husband is "in a bubble" as he works. "When he's writing, he's consumed with these scenes and relationships," she says. "I'll get up in the middle of the night and find him talking to himself as characters." In the early days of their relationship, these possessions alarmed her. Now she's become used to his visitors.

Finally, Dalton Trumbo took over. Finally, McNamara had a draft with which he was happy. It only took another six months for Brown and him to recognize that their timing was off. By then, it was 2009 and the country floundered in a severe recession. All his labor-intense dedication did not matter in such an economic climate: "We knew no one was going to make this movie."

Fail Again. Fail Better.

It's a truism that writers' egos are fragile, that they are plagued with insecurities. But as deflated as McNamara felt, he had proven himself in television and was confident that he could return to it, while keeping his hopes up for *Trumbo*. "To kind of keep the engine fueled," he wrote a pilot and developed *In Plain Sight* for the USA Network. He came up with the idea for *Aquarius*, a crime thriller set in Los Angeles during the Charles Manson era but before the notorious murders. He and producer Marty Adelstein sold it to FX, but again the timing wasn't right. *Aquarius* didn't air until 2015 after being picked up by NBC.

Suddenly, in 2012, a friend of McNamara's who was a fan of *Trumbo* had put together a small amount of money to finance an independent project, and he wanted to option the script. An enthusiastic McNamara called his agent, who squelched the idea: *Trumbo* needed a major producer and a major star, he told his client. Whereupon McNamara started yelling.

"I said, 'You've had this fucking thing almost five years, and this is the first offer of anything by anyone ever. Get me a better offer this week or I'm going to lose my fucking shit."

He can talk to his agent Paul Haas like that, says McNamara, because he's been with the same man for 25 years. "The *Tootsie* scene where Sydney Pollack and Dustin Hoffman have the fight about the tomato? That's me and my agent."

Yelling proved effective. Another agent from the office called McNamara, excited, to say he wanted to get the script to Michael London, producer of *Sideways*, *Milk*, and *The Illusionist*.

London didn't want to read it, despite the entreaties of his then development executive Kelly Mullen. "To my eternal discredit I told her, 'Kelly, we're not going to make a movie about Dalton Trumbo and the Blacklist," says London, who eventually caved under Mullen's pressure. "I started reading the script, and I didn't stop for two hours. And when I stopped, I felt like I'd seen a whole movie in my head and had a whole emotional experience. It doesn't happen often."

Like Kevin Kelly Brown and McNamara, he was moved by the story of this complicated man—a communist who enjoyed money and the pleasures it brought, but who stood up



for free speech and refused to capitulate to thugs in power. Now London also became stuck: He passionately wanted to make *Trumbo*.

"It's just a great thing that he never could let up," London says of McNamara and the script. "He wasn't getting paid. He wasn't getting validated. Then all of a sudden it happens."

McNamara explains his commitment this way: "There's no other Hollywood story that affects the First Amendment, or freedom of speech, or the freedom for people to make movies that say things that are controversial and even wrong. I felt like it's the only story Hollywood has to tell about itself that had any political import."

"I wrote one draft too quickly, then I wrote a million drafts slowly. My main memory is of failing. For years." But there was a reason that motivated John McNamara. "I think what I wanted to do was live in the skin of a man who fought battles that I would never have the courage to fight myself."

The Way He Was

McNamara had learned about the Blacklist at an early age. Growing up in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with no writers in the family, his boyhood heroes were *Star Trek*'s Gene Roddenberry and *Hill Street Blues*' Steven Bochco. Already writing at the age of 18, he won an award from the Dramatists Guild for his comedy, *Present Tense*, which was given a professional production during the 1982 Young Playwrights Festival in New York.

This was heady stuff for teens, and after hearing from Stephen Sondheim that the novice writers were in charge of their own productions, another young award-winner promptly fired Garson Kanin, famous for *Born Yesterday* and *Adam's Rib*. Arthur Laurents, equally well-known for writing *West Side Story, Gypsy,* and *The Way We Were*, stepped in to direct the student's piece.

"He was loquacious and funny and told these heartbreaking stories," McNamara says about Laurents, who had himself been fired from the autobiographical Blacklist-themed film *The Way We Were*. (He was rehired and received sole credit after the film's director Sydney Pollack brought in Trumbo and 10 other screenwriters for rewrites that proved unsatisfactory.)

McNamara was appalled by Laurents' stories of betrayals between friends desperate to save their own careers and avoid prison. He was also inspired by those who had refused to inform the Committee about their own political beliefs, or name names. Early in 1984, McNamara audited a graduate screenwriting seminar at New York University, taught by the once blacklisted writers Ring Lardner Jr. and Waldo Salt, as well as Ian McLellan Hunter, who during those ugly days of Hollywood had fronted for Trumbo, posing as the writer of *Roman Holiday* (1953). Hunter had picked up an Academy Award for the film, for which Trumbo was ultimately credited.

The only one in the class who knew anything about HUAC and Hollywood, McNamara was eager to engage his teachers in conversations. "They were completely unsentimental. I could detect no bitterness. I could detect not even acrimony toward political opponents," he remembers of the Blacklist survivors.

Lardner's dry wit even gave McNamara the courage to ask an unlikely question. "I said to him, 'Did you ever at the time you were in this see any humor in it?' He said, 'Well, it was a little difficult to see the humor when I was in federal prison, until Congressman Thomas showed up."" In a small victory for those against whom he had waged his philistine war, J. Parnell Thomas, who viciously led the HUAC hearings, had been convicted of fraud and sent to the same lock-up. Remembering this anecdote years later, McNamara used artistic license in his screenplay to have Trumbo instead

of Lardner bump into Thomas.

It was Hunter, though, who sent McNamara in search of Bruce Cook's 1977 Dalton Trumbo biography. After arriving in Hollywood, McNamara came upon the book at Larry Edmunds Bookshop, kept it for more than 20 years, and had just moved it from a lower to an upper shelf on the day that it caught the eye of Kevin Kelly Brown.

A lucky move indeed.

Once Michael London was on board, McNamara announced that he hoped to direct the film himself. A snag: He'd never directed anything. Ever.

"If you want to direct, it'll take five years," London explained. "If you'll step aside, it'll take two." McNamara stepped aside, but he wanted a say in who would be director.

The first person he thought of was Jay Roach, of *Meet the Fockers* and *Game Change*. Roach passed at first. The film's villain was John Wayne, and he felt the cowboy star to be such an iconic figure that he couldn't be the film's only antagonist.

"This is where all my research paid off," says McNamara, who suggested introducing the gossip columnist Hedda Hopper, famous for her fancy hats and her venomous tongue in outing those she believed to be communists, as well as anyone else she disliked. "I did the rewrite in three days," says McNamara.

With financing and a director in place, a fruitless year-long search began for a major movie star. Finding a Trumbo wasn't going to be easy. But *Breaking Bad* was winding down, and if Bryan Cranston were interested, London thought, it would be better to attach him and get the film made rather than continue looking for a conventional marquee name. "Bryan's such a huge star now that it seems silly to say that," London says. The film's financiers were less prescient. Their message: "If it's Bryan Cranston, we're out."

"We said to the financiers, 'We like Bryan. Goodbye,'" McNamara remembers.

Shivani Rawat's company, ShivHans Pictures, agreed to finance the \$20 million project but wanted a film star to play Hopper, and Helen Mirren said yes. So, with Diane Lane as Trumbo's wife, Cleo; Elle Fanning his older daughter Nikola; and Louis C.K. as a composite character of a blacklisted writer, the production scheduled its initial read-through, at Bergamot Station in July 2014—three days after the first read-through at Paramount of *Aquarius*, finally set for NBC, with David Duchovny as its lead.

The industry rewards work with more work. While all

this proceeded, McNamara received a greenlight from the SyFy channel to write a pilot for *The Magicians*, based on Lev Grossman's best-selling fantasy trilogy for grownups. It would shoot in New Orleans three weeks after *Trumbo* wrapped.

"I just said to myself, Get up and do it," says McNamara, who for Aquarius brought on Yglesias, Sera Gamble (who had worked with him on Eyes and a number of pilots), Prime Suspect's Alexandra Cunningham, and detective-turned-writer Michael Sheehan. He became so busy that he Ubered around L.A., writing in the car as he went, "shockingly happy" to juggle three projects. "I would take different aspects of each job and apply it to the other job, and it was helpful in a way to not obsess about one thing for too long. If it had been just the one thing, I would have freaked out more."

Write Turn

In the original drafts, McNamara had trouble finding a visually interesting opening. He admits that the film's beginning would come together only during editing. Jay Roach had never been happy with a montage approach, and Cranston wanted to get to know Trumbo more quickly. Discussions led nowhere until McNamara hit upon creating a Hollywood party scene involving a fight between Trumbo and the conservative director Sam Wood, with John Wayne observing. It became known as "that goddamn party scene," McNamara remembers: It was long, required extras, period costumes, hairdos, and a mansion location, making the shoot expensive. So it was in, then it was out, then-after Roach lobbied the financiers—in again. The director wanted the contrast between people arguing about the wellbeing of workers amid the glamour of a Hollywood party to quickly sum up the tensions swirling around town during the 1940s. "I just didn't want to give it up," Roach says.

More rewrites ensued, with London marveling at McNamara's stamina

Trumbo on Trumbo

Nikola Trumbo talks about her father and the film.

Since I did have a belief that this film was actually going to be made, I wanted it to be as good a portrayal as possible of my father and as honest a portrayal of him as was possible. I guess what I didn't want to see was idolatry, or worse, the opposite.

I live in Seattle, so John [McNamara] began by coming to visit my partner, Karen, and me to introduce himself. There's no fake about him. He is who he is. And he's also kind of like Trumbo was. He travels in high style. He just dresses immaculately. Trumbo was pretty dapper when he got dressed to go out. And so was John. I've never seen him without a jacket. He'd already sent us the first draft of the script to read and comment on. He made it clear that he was not going to change a word unless he felt he should. That we were not going to be able to influence him in any way, but he was interested in what we had to say.

I think mostly my father's dialogue did not work [in the first draft]. He was so precise in his language, and John had written a kind of contemporary script. And that all changed. Karen and I both talked with John about what we liked and didn't like, and he was receptive to criticism, which is unusual.

People would be so spellbound by my father, just listening to him talk. I remember one evening when he was in his late 60s, at his house, sitting in a chair telling stories, and at his feet literally were Peter O'Toole and another well-known English actor, Alan Bates, and they were both sitting listening to him tell these stories. They were entranced.

Bumps in the Night

I was about nine when the whole HUAC thing began, and old enough to understand. In those days, things were primitive. You could hear the FBI pick up the phone. There was a click to let you know that the FBI was on the line. It was pretty clumsy. My brother Chris and I arrogantly would scoff at the FBI. We thought they didn't know what they were doing. They tried to tail us once, and we believed that they left a little piece of white sheet or something caught on the bumper so that they could follow our car.

I don't think either of us was traumatized by his not being there when he was in prison. We didn't see much of him anyway because he was working all night and sleeping all day. We knew that he was going to jail. And that was, in a funny way, kind of exciting.

But a child's perspective of that whole period of time is so different from an adult's. I can't imagine for him what it was like to be behind bars. I know that the whole period altered the course of his and Cleo's lives together. It was just profoundly awful for them. Not the path they thought they would take when they got married in 1939 and rode off into the sunset. This script has captured that impact of the blacklist on personal relationships. It's important that it does capture that.

My father and I had a contentious relationship, and that's important to the story. That's honestly



portrayed. The issues are different, but it doesn't matter—the arguing is the same. I think we argued because we saw ourselves in each other.

Both my parents were very honest, so I guess I didn't know anything other than honesty. Duplicity was a startling thing to discover. But it's almost as though that's what you expect. You expect the FBI, or the authorities, to be watching you if you have a perspective that isn't shared by the larger population. That's how I grew up, and I continue to believe this. Ed Snowden has demonstrated that it's not unreasonable. It could easily happen again, and it could happen very quickly.



and focus. "I'm not sure if I'd ever met another writer who would go off, take these notes and idle thoughts, and come back and have done something unexpected and great with what was sometimes half-hearted criticism," London recalls. "That's a function of his television training and the feeling that everything can be rewritten and made better."

A major challenge came on a Friday night during the cast's 10 days of rehearsals in New Orleans. Cranston was thoroughly into his role by then: the voice, the walk, the hair, the cigarette. But the actor always had in mind the movie's complete story, aware of its arc, as he had been while working for Vince Gilligan in *Breaking Bad*.

"This could be good," Cranston said to McNamara, who replied, "I hope so. We're all slaving our balls off for scale."

Then Cranston added a comment that strikes dread in a writer's heart, especially on the verge of a shoot: "It's really missing only one thing." Pulling Roach into the conversation, Cranston pointed out that the script needed a character as looney and unrealistic on the left as Hedda Hopper was on the right.

Roach agreed. Easily said, so now revise the script. Again. Create a new character. Again. But this time during rehearsals 10 days before the shoot begins.

At that point, Louis C.K.'s Arlen Hird was more emotional cripple than wild-eyed leftist. Over the weekend, with C.K. about to arrive on Sunday night, McNamara transformed Hird into a raging ideologue who loathed Trumbo's perceived hypocrisies and who wanted to destroy the capitalist system.

C.K. thought the rewrites were cool but asked if he might change a couple of lines. "You're fuckin' Louis C.K.," McNamara recalls saying. "I'll get the credit for it. Fuckin' change it."

That rewrite was difficult but simple compared to a balancing act involving an argument between Trumbo and John Wayne. "I needed to do a bunch of things at once," he says of the script. "I needed to distill Trumbo's voice; I needed to distill John Wayne's voice. I needed them both to be intelligent but obviously in direct opposition. I couldn't have either guy give a big speech, because in real life the other guy would have cut him off. I remember a lot of versions of that scene."

He wouldn't know if it worked until on set in New Orleans, watching Trumbo and Wayne argue about whether Congress had the right to investigate people's thoughts, prayers, votes, and the content of movies. "If you're going to hit me, I want to take my glasses off," Trumbo says to an enraged Wayne.

McNamara turned to Michael London and in relief signaled, Oh, God, this scene works.

That same night came the only time Helen Mirren ever needed help. McNamara just had to alter a line slightly, but a grateful Mirren turned and said, "It's so lovely to have a living writer on the set.

"This could be good," Bryan Cranston said to John McNamara, who replied, "I hope so. We're all slaving our balls off for scale." Then the star of *Breaking Bad* made the comment that strikes dread in a writer's heart, especially on the verge of a shoot: "It's really missing only one thing."

It's not like when you do Shakespeare. He's never there when you need him."

Another Mirren compliment for McNamara: "I even like your parentheticals."

Will the Blacklist Ever End?

By July 2014, John McNamara had lived for seven years with Dalton Trumbo. He had pictured the screenwriter at his family's ranch in Lockwood Valley, where Trumbo sometimes wrote at night and slept during the day. He imagined the many hours Trumbo soaked in a bathtub while writing. He lived through the HUAC hearings and subsequent imprisonment, and during the Blacklist when Trumbo struggled to earn a living through fronts while helping other blacklisted writers find work. He had imagined the

survivor in the 1960s when the dismantling of the Blacklist began, thanks in part to Trumbo's strategic set-up of Otto Preminger versus Kirk Douglas, each wanting to be the first to announce they'd given screen credit to a blacklistee: Trumbo had written *Exodus* for Preminger and *Spartacus* for Douglas.

Bryan Cranston's performance was already so vivid at the first read-through, McNamara realized, *Oh, right. After all those years alone with Trumbo, now I have to share him.*

And now the finished film belongs to the masses.

"There's a lot of reasons this story spoke to John," says producer Michael London, who points to McNamara's personality quirks of cantankerousness, obstinacy and maddening need to debate. "Those are qualities he shares with Dalton Trumbo, and one of the reasons that John was able to write this so beautifully was because he felt a close affinity to Trumbo's absolute belief in certain principles."

Nikola Trumbo—who with sister Mitzi consulted with McNamara, telling stories about their father, reading versions of the script, and sitting in on rehearsals and the shoot—shares London's observation. "There's a kind of Trumbo quality to John that's fun to see." But above all, it was McNamara's candor and honesty that remind her of her father.

The film industry turned on Dalton Trumbo and punished him, McNamara points out, but Trumbo refused to succumb to bitterness. And without Trumbo, he believes, the Blacklist would have continued into the 1970s. That was the man he hoped to know when he started writing.

"And I think I know—not the man, obviously, that his children knew—but I know a version of him that is almost like a complete human being," McNamara says. "But it's not the man. It's me, him, Bryan, Jay. Even Diane's in there, Elle's in there. It's a version of him that's almost like a complete 3-D rendering."

When shooting was almost finished, the work nearly over except for editing, Awards season, and talking to the media, McNamara wrote a heartfelt letter to Niki Trumbo. He wrote: "I really miss him."

Of Courseyou Tell the Truth

ACTRESS MARSHA HUNT'S HEROIC STAND FOR BLACKLISTED WRITERS.

arsha Hunt has credits in more than 100 film and television appearances, most notably for the 1940 version of Pride and Prejudice, The Human Comedy (1943); Cry Havoc (1943); and Anthony Mann's film noir classic,

Raw Deal (1948). Yet the connection this actress has to the Writers Guild is profound and largely unknown. For the courage and tenacity both she and her screenwriter husband, Robert Presnell Ir., displayed during the darkest period in Hollywood history, writers owe a debt of gratitude.

The Blacklist is still a painful subject for her more than a half-century later. Now 97, Hunt wants a new generation to understand and "to be aware that fear is incredibly strong and when it hits the arts it's mass murder. It quieted such

talented people. You see, it never officially started and never officially ended."

Hunt and Presnell were never political, never joiners. That all changed in 1947 when the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) began its reign of terror, rounding up so-called "Hollywood subversives." There had been no precedent as to the paranoia malignantly growing throughout the nation. Even though HUAC had been around since 1938, it only came to prominence when the committee set its sights on the high-profile Hollywood industry.

Hunt was at the peak of her career, and Presnell under contract to 20th Century Fox. Hunt had been a working actor since the mid 1930s and contracted to MGM for five to six pictures a year. Her patriotism should have been beyond reproach—answering every fan letter she received from soldiers overseas, volunteering at the Hollywood Canteen.

"We loved our country," she recalls. "We were upset about menaces to it and if that was called 'communism' I didn't know the first thing about it—or care to know. I just knew it was the most unpopular word in our lexicon. You could be a rapist and you wouldn't have brought forth as much blame, suspicion, and hatred as that word—whatever it connoted. That was the dirty word in our language for a number of years."

One False Move

The Screen Actors Guild was swept up by the national hysteria. In 1946, actor Franchot Tone asked Hunt to occupy his seat on the Screen Actors Guild board while he performed in a play. The president of SAG at that time was George Montgomery (1944-46), about to be followed by Ronald Reagan (1947-52). Once on the board, Hunt quietly studied the procedures, but after hearing the same rhetoric about communism at every meeting she felt compelled to speak up.

"I asked a question once at a board meeting: 'I'm sorry, I don't understand our preoccupation with communism. Isn't that political? What has that to do with actors? Aren't we

FAY BAINTER

MARSHA HUNT

ELLA RAINES

FRANCES GIFFORD DIANA LEWIS

HEATHER ANGEL DOROTHY MORRIS

DIRECTED BY RICHARD THORPE - PRODUCED BY EDWIN KNOPF

a union for actors? Wages, hours, working conditions—that's what I was told a union was for. All we talk about is who's a communist. What has that to do with us as actors?' Well, eyes rolled and obviously it was decided that I must be [a communist]. Suddenly, I realized there was a right and a left [in politics]—and what they were about."

Hunt continued to irritate SAG conservatives, in particular Robert Montgomery, a fellow board member and past president. Montgomery wanted to reintroduce a proposal he believed would be worth reconsidering. The proposal was for all three Guilds-Directors, Writers, Actors—to merge into a single union. This could possibly give each more bargaining



leverage against studios and producers.

Hunt was appointed to the exploratory committee, alongside Montgomery, to discuss the matter with their counterparts at the Screen Writers and Directors guilds. The idea of tri-guild solidarity was intriguing, but Montgomery (on his own accord) added the condition that all three Guilds must officially avow and assert that communists would be barred from membership. "I was aghast



because we had never been instructed by SAG to include such a clause!" Hunt exclaims, still shocked, her outrage evident after all these years.

But when Montgomery reported back to the membership the results of their encounter with the two Guilds, he presented a skewed version. According to Hunt, "Montgomery said [to the committee members], 'I'll do the speaking.' His report was not my memory of what had transpired, and I spent a sleepless week thinking, *Do I counter Montgomery?* He's revered on the board as a founder of SAG. Finally, I decided I have to tell the truth. So I said to our membership, 'You've heard from Mr. Montgomery about our meeting with the writers and directors. His memories are not entirely the same as mine, and I'd like you to hear mine as well as his.' So I told them what had really happened."

Both the Writers and Directors Guilds rejected the notion of a non-communism requirement for membership. "Only the actors considered it because Montgomery did," Hunt adds. (On November 17, 1947, the Screen Actors Guild followed Montgomery's lead and voted to require its officers to swear a pledge asserting each was not a Communist. No other Guild adopted that clause for their membership.)

Going in as a favor for a friend, Hunt had been indifferent to politics, but in a few months on the SAG board that all changed. Unfortunately, the worst was yet to come.

HUAC Calling

Among the 19 subpoenaed by HUAC to appear before the committee in Washington was the Presnell's dear friend, writer-producer Adrian Scott (*Mr. Lucky, Crossfire*). As the Presnells began to comprehend the gravitas of the looming show trials in Washington, they felt compelled to take action



Marsha Hunt and husband Robert Presnell Jr. (top) felt compelled to take action because Adrian Scott was being denied basic civil liberties and so joined the Committee for the First Amendment. The 97-year-old Hunt (above) remembers the pride and patriotism on board the plane: "We were one in our purpose."

While their days were taken up with sitting in on the HUAC hearings, Marsha Hunt and husband Robert Presnell Jr. managed a meeting with Waldo Salt, another screenwriter "under suspicion." Salt sneaked into their Washington, D.C., hotel room and the three talked until 3 a.m. But first, Salt demonstrated how they had to jingle their keys and snap their fingers to cut out their voices being taped on the Dictaphone beyond the wall. The FBI, Salt warned, were in the next suite, secretly recording their conversation.

because Scott was being denied basic civil liberties.

In mid October 1947, the Committee for the First Amendment was born when John Huston, Anatole Litvak, William Wyler, and Humphrey Bogart met for lunch at Lucy's El Adobe restaurant (across from Paramount) to discuss the political maneuvers happening secretly behind closed studio doors.

Presnell wrote two detailed letters about the events, which became the most thorough historic record.

From Presnell's letter: "We [Marsha and Presnell] joined the committee the first day, which took place at William Wyler's house. About 60 people came, largely well-known stars, some writers, some directors, and some producers. Wyler hooked up an amplifier and speaker to the telephone, and we talked to the 19 in Washington and the whole room heard the conversation. We talked to Milestone [Lewis], Scott [Adrian], Crum, and Kenny [defense lawyers], and everyone knew the circuit was tapped, and [only] a few names were mentioned...except to say, 'We're all here, listening to you.'



The enthusiasm was high, and you could feel it in the pit of your stomach."

They collected \$10,000 that evening, decided to put on a radio show to counter HUAC's propaganda, and chose to send a representative contingency to Washington.

Within a few days, a paid advertisement appeared in the trade papers, signed by about 100 names in protest of HUAC. From there the signatures grew to more than 300. There

were meetings in Hollywood homes resulting in more donations. Hollywood was banding together in the good fight, and the fervor was growing at a rapid pace.

From the Presnell letter: "During this period, Marsha and I were busy coating material and writing for a big meeting at the Shrine Auditorium, where the 19 subpoenaed were to speak. Joe Losey staged this affair. The speakers, the 19, plus Norman Corwin, Evelyn Keyes, Bartley

Crum, Bob Kenny, and Gene Kelly, wrote their own speeches. I edited and tied them together for Kelly, who was M.C. The meeting lasted an hour and a half, and about 5,500 people were there. Not all 19 spoke, of course. But during the meeting, each subpoenaed writer, director, and producer was described, and his works described. And the Thomas Committee [Congressman John Parnell Thomas, chairman HUAC hearings] was described. At the conclusion, a telegram in the form of a resolution was read. It said in part, that the Un-American Committee was set up with limits and definition, that it abrogated civil rights; that it cost taxpayers millions and had not proposed any legislation in nine years, save one piece which was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court; that it attempted censorship by intimidation; that it was headed by men of known racial and religious political bias. It ended with this statement: 'We demand in the name of



30 SUBPENAED HERE IN RED PROBE

PADEVIEW OF WARWILKERSON

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The article urged "progressives" to swamp Zanuck with letters of protest and surmised that enough advance protests might make the producer "see the folly of trying to comply with the House un-American Committee's command to make films against labor and the people." And swamp him is what they are doing.

Furthermore, it was charged, the decision of Zanuck and others to produce pictures aimed at Soviet spies stemmed from the recent visit of Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, before the House Committee.

"He (Johnston) was ordered," the article went on, "to get busy and produce films telling the American people the evils of totalitarian Communism as during the war they made film

Writs Will Be Served At Once; Thomas Says Industry Is In Revolt Against Communists

Washington. —Communist penetration of Hollywood has been so poisonous that "there is a rebellion within the industry on the part of top stars, directors and producers, who refuse to touch a film that follows the Communist line," Rep. J. Parnell Thomas charged yesterday. Thomas, chairman, drew this startling picture before the House Committee on Un-American

Fairbanks Tie-Up

Dickered By UA

Mono. Net For 39 Weeks Up Slightly

New York.—Monogram Pictures Corp., in its report for the 39 weeks ended March 29, 1947, made public phenology by Steve Brody, president, pendeday by Steve Brody, president, some period for for federal income taxes. This compares with \$511,176 for the same period the previous year. Consense period the previous year. Consense period for federal income taxes, amounted to \$260,991 for the 39 weeks ended March 29 last, compared with \$248,-797 for the 39 weeks of the previous year.

Broidy drew attention to the activities of Allied Artists, which has five pictures completed, the first of which, "It Happened on 5th August " is now heins before the state of the state o

No Reporter Tomorrow Tomorrow being Memorial Day and a legal holiday, the Hollywood Reporter will not be published. The next issue of your Reporter will reach you on Mon.

Fear Of Reprisals Hampers Probe Of Petrillo By Nixon

The "Hash" strike Tuesday righ prusiclans at Earl Carroll's was under scrutiny today by Rep. Richard M. Nison, member of the House labor committee, here-probing practices of the problem of the problem of fer with Carroll, but said that was the only name he could make public at this time because other studio, radio and recording heads feared possible reprisals from the musiclans'

"They tell me the risk is simply too great," he said vesterday, adding he would see about 12 such executives. Here since Tuesday, he will remain until tomorrow, checking unfair contract provisions, the extent to which small recording companies are being put out of business, and how

all Americans, that the House Un-American Activities be abolished while there yet remains the freedom to abolish it.' At this juncture, Marsha spoke, and she concluded with a recitation of My Country 'tis of Thee...which may not sound very dramatic to you, but which at the time was perhaps the most dramatically exciting thing of the evening.... so well did she say it. Five thousand people stood to say so."

The Presnells stayed the course, working tirelessly on the committee. They joined a newly formed elite group of 26 Hollywood professionals, an offshoot of the Committee for the First Amendment that had taken root in October. They flew to Washington on October 27, 1947, to protest the hearings. The group titled their mission *Hollywood Fights Back*. "I'm sure it was Adrian [Scott] who put us on that plane to defend the 19," Hunt says of their friendship.

The well-intentioned group was made up of actors (Gene Kelly, Humphrey Bogart and wife Lauren Bacall, Evelyn Keyes, Danny Kaye), writers (Phillip Dunne, Mel Frank, Sheridan Gibney, Ernest Pascal, Presnell), director John Huston, producers Joe Sistrom and Arthur Kober, publicist Roger Cowan, and composer/lyricist Ira Gershwin. Hunt remembers the pride and patriotism on board the plane: "We were one in our purpose."

On the ground, the *Hollywood Reporter* was calling for them to be "run out of town along with the 19."

Mr. & Mrs. Smith Go to Washington

The two-day trip made headlines throughout the country as they landed in cities to state their case. Presnell described the flight in his letter: "We had a Constellation to ourselves, plenty of coffee, a beautiful day, and high spirits. Some of us caught up on sleep, and Marsha and I began jotting down ideas for things to say in interviews. No one in this group had ever been active on any committee before, no one was politically articulate in short sentences. Later in the day, the copilot tuned in our radio show, and we took turns sitting in the cockpit listening on headphones to the radio show that stirred up tens of thousands of letters and telegrams, topping the number of letters ever received for any program...and which during the following five days, was rebroadcast nine times in different localities. I didn't hear much of it, because I already knew nearly every line by heart and I wanted others to hear it. I stared down at the country and became filled with a sense of history. I thought of how Vermont and Massachusetts had held out joining the union until the Bill of Rights was incorporated into the Constitution."

But once in the nation's capital, they met skepticism and hostility from the majority of the press. Hunt recalls: "We were photographed all over the place. We stayed at the same hotel. We were told not to talk to the press except when we were all assembled. John Huston said, 'I'll be our spokesman. If the press interviews us, I'll do the talking.' He was not without ego. And Philip Dunne, a really fine writer and a lovely man, was our other spokesman. So they did the talking for us. I remem-

ber there was a woman who interviewed us and asked, 'You're a bunch of film people—what are you doing in Washington? What are you stirring yourselves now about?' And nobody had a ready answer. I had it, but I'd been told not to speak. I wanted to say: Because Washington and this terrible committee is hurting the freedom of speech in film. We're here to defend our work, our industry. I was dying to say that. And we were misquoted between quotation marks of things I never said to a Hearst reporter who never interviewed me."

While their days were spent sitting in on the HUAC hearings, the Presnells managed at night to visit Adrian Scott, ill



The Presnells joined a newly formed elite group of 26 Hollywood professionals and flew to Washington on October 27, 1947, to protest the hearings. (From bottom) Lauren Bacall, Humphrey Bogart, Richard Conte, Geraldine Brooks, June Havoc, Paul Henreid, Marsha Hunt, Evelyn Keyes, Danny Kaye, Jane Wyatt, Mrs. Sterling Hayden, Gene Kelly, Sterling Hayden, Sheppard Strudwick (behind Hayden), Robert Presnell Jr. (top, far left), John Huston (back, top right).

with bronchitis. They also arranged a meeting with Waldo Salt, another screenwriter "under suspicion." Salt sneaked into their Washington, D.C., hotel room and they talked until three in the morning. But first, Salt demonstrated how to jingle their keys and snap their fingers to distort their voices being taped on the Dictaphone beyond the wall. The FBI, Salt warned, were in the next suite, secretly recording their conversation.

In contrast to their optimistic flight to Washington, the



An offshoot of the Committee for the First Amendment that had taken root in October, the group titled their mission Hollywood Fights Back: (from left) Jules Buell, Marsha Hunt, David Hopkins, Richard Conte, Ralph Alswang, June Havoc, John Huston, Sterling Hayden, Humphrey Bogart, Paul Henreid, Lauren Bacall, Joe Sistrom, Evelyn Keyes, Danny Kaye, Sheppard Strudwick, Jane Wyatt, Geraldine Brooks, Ira Gershwin, and Larry Adler.

return to Hollywood cast a much different mood, somber and subdued. The Washington press corps had ridiculed them, even the stars. Above all, they felt disheartened by the hearings. For Hunt, it all became a cruel lesson in pressure politics and yellow journalism. A well-intentioned two-day trip to Washington ultimately became ineffective and might have turned the tide against the burgeoning industry resistance, while some members of this group fell under suspicion for merely expressing their democratic right to free speech, Hunt among them.

Worse, shortly after returning home, a few in the group, under pressure by their studio bosses, made an abrupt about face. Bogart and Bacall, the most prominent members, were the first to recant on their decision to defend the 19 (now dwindling into the "Hollywood Ten" as nearly half capitulated, becoming "friendly witnesses"). The trip, Bogart announced, had been "ill-advised." Other celebrities followed the superstar's lead. Jimmy Stewart even denied he'd lent his name to the cause, claiming he "knew nothing about politics and had never even voted."

Let the Blacklist Begin

Fear took over Hollywood. The witch hunts began in earnest and, sadly, neither the Screen Actors Guild, the Screen Writers Guild, nor the Screen Directors Guild defended union members under suspicion. "It was just the start of this scary period when people were watching over your shoulder or reporting each other as suspiciously liberal, or possibly a real 'red,'" Hunt says. "Robert [Presnell] was a liberal, and fearless he surely was, but he was not a joiner" (except for serving a

single term on the Writers Guild board).

Although Presnell was never blacklisted, he did front on at least one script for writer Dalton Trumbo. "Dalton called up," remembers Hunt, "and he said, 'I can't feed my children unless you front for me.' Robert didn't quite know how to take credit for what he hadn't written, but to keep those children fed he fronted for him. It was a brave thing to do because if exposed a front would never work again. Then the industry would blacklist him." For the loan of his name, Presnell refused to accept any money from Trumbo. "Not a nickel."

Following the SAG vote to impose a loyalty oath on its membership, Hunt's face-off with Robert Montgomery became known. Hunt's film and television offers stuttered to a few minor roles. She turned to her other love, the theater. In 1950 she graced the cover of *Life* magazine while starring on Broadway in George Bernard Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple* opposite Alfred Drake.

A few months later her name appeared in *Red Channels*, the pamphlet naming suspected "communists." Under Hunt's name was a list of associations and activities she'd never taken part in, including a peace conference in Stockholm—even though she'd never visited Sweden in her life. The pamphlet also made mention of her involvement with a movement in the theater community to stop a proposed bill designed to empower a "morality czar" with the right to close any production "under suspicion." Along with Hunt, most of the theater community was opposed to this proposal, but "it was duly reported in the press that I was part of it."

At this point her screen and television career came to a halt.

"We loved our country. We were upset about menaces to it and if that was called communism, I didn't know the first thing about it—or care to know. I just knew it was the most unpopular word in our lexicon. I think you could be a rapist and you wouldn't have brought forth as much blame, suspicion, and hatred as that word—whatever it connotated. That was the dirty word in our language for a number of years."

Hunt was never subpoenaed, was never a member of the communist party, and was never seriously involved in any controversy before HUAC. For her, joining hundreds of other Hollywood figures trying to defend the First Amendment hadn't seemed dangerous. But years later, while performing in a play in Atlanta, a woman involved with the production told Hunt that George Murphy had just come through town; when the song-and-dance man learned Hunt would be visiting, the future senator had warned the woman to, "Look out for her; she's a communist." This was a revelation to Hunt.

"So I then began to understand why Metro dropped my contract," she says. "I had no problems. Nothing but delight. And they didn't renew my contract. It was a blow. I couldn't think why. I loved everybody; everybody loved me. I was as busy as any contract player on the lot. Now I understood [that] I was beginning to sound like a liberal and I had to be silenced, partly because I was articulate. 'We have to quiet that,' George Murphy must have told L.B. Mayer. 'Not that one, she's dangerous!'"

By the end of the 1950s, Hunt was offered television

roles once again, yet her film career was pretty much over. "It petered out ever so quietly on tiptoe because no one acknowledged that there had ever been such a thing [as a blacklist]. One by one, people just started working again. But you see I was [still] vocal at the time."

In spite of the valiant effort made by the Presnells and others in 1947, Adrian Scott was found guilty of contempt and served nine months out of his 12-month sentence in federal prison (receiving three months off for good behavior). After his release, he moved to England and then France with his then-wife, actress Ann Shirley. Unable to procure work, his marriage broke up and he returned to the States. For a time he lived in the guest house of the Presnells and found work at a tov factory, according to Hunt. Fortunately for Scott, he soon met and married Joan LaCour, who was an executive secretary for the Television Writers of America. LaCour became a front, allowing Scott to practice his trade once again, but in silence (Scott would not receive another screen credit until 1972). Although LaCour began as a "front" writer, she learned under her husband's mentorship and carved out her own writing career (*Have Gun Will Travel, Lassie, Wonderful World of Disney*).

In 1971, Hunt returned to the screen when Trumbo offered a role in the only film he would direct, *Johnny Got His Gun*, based on his anti-war novel. Hunt recalled working with Trumbo, whom she considered a great writer but not necessarily a great director.

"Some months after shooting, Dalton called up and said, 'This is an apology. I had never directed before; I should never have tried it without an editor at my shoulder or elbow saying do this, do that.' My scenes were interminable, and there was no way you could cut them because they were too long. He was having to cut three hours out of what I filmed. Much of my part ended up on the cutting room floor. He asked me to

forgive him."

Similar to many other victims of the Hollywood blacklist, Hunt's career was cut short, yet she doesn't see the point in being bitter. This fearless woman spoke up for her beliefs and values in the face of adversity and never stood down like so many others at the time.

"I couldn't imagine not doing that," Hunt says. "Of course you tell the truth. There was never a choice to be made. For the most part I understood the cowardice of people who just out and out lied. I said, 'Well, I guess they have to. I can't, so I won't.' And I didn't."



You've Been Served

DECODING THE HUAC SUBPOENA.

n early 1951, panic and fear started to spread throughout Hollywood as the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), now chaired by John S. Wood (D-Georgia), began meeting privately with potential friendly witnesses and issuing subpoenas for a new round of hearings on the communist infiltration of the motion picture industry. Between 1951 and 1953, more than 100 people, many of them writers, were served with the notorious pink subpoenas and called to testify before HUAC. Subpoenas were delivered to homes as well as to movie studio offices and dressing rooms; some people were fired as soon as the studio bosses heard the news.

In May 1952, Daily Variety reported that writer Edward Huebsch was served with his subpoena during a Screen Writers' Guild membership meeting. In *The Inquisition in Hollywood* by Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, screenwriter Bess Taffel described getting her subpoena one evening from HUAC investigator William Wheeler, who sat with her as she recovered from the shock. She remembered telling him: "This is death, you know."

Some witnesses left the country to avoid their subpoenas; others stayed but made a point of evading the servers for weeks at a time, much to the chagrin of the Committee. Wheeler, the HUAC investigator, was even called to testify in April 1951 about his efforts to track down 10 individuals (mostly writers) who were using various tactics to avoid being served.

Paul Jarrico successfully dodged his subpoena for several weeks before coming forward and publicly accepting it from the U.S. marshal on March 22, 1951. The hunt for reluctant witnesses

had been written up in the newspaper (complete with the names and addresses of all those being sought), and the marshal was accompanied by reporters who took a statement from Jarrico.

The next day, when he arrived for work at the RKO studios, Jarrico was turned away and not even allowed into his office to "pick up his personal papers and his whiskey bottle."

Most subpoenaed witnesses met in advance with the FBI or the Committee's investigators. Those who indicated they'd cooperate were coached on their testimony before appearing at the public hearings, which were held in both Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles. In the end, witnesses who cooperated with the Committee by disavowing their past political affiliations and providing names of other communists were "cleared" to go back to work. The most infamous of these was screenwriter Martin Berkeley, who named more than 150 people during his testimony. Witnesses who chose to rely on the Fifth Amendment, or who testified about their own political beliefs but refused to name names, were fired or found it impossible to openly work after their testimony, unless they later agreed to undergo a clearance procedure.

Jarrico, Taffel, and Huebsch did not cooperate, and all three were blacklisted.

Made an Example

The subpoena shown here was issued to Robert Lees, the successful and popular co-writer of screen comedies like *Hold That Ghost* and *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*. Lees, who had joined the Communist Party in 1939, was one of the first Hollywood figures subpoenaed to testify before HUAC at the new round of hearings in the spring of 1951.

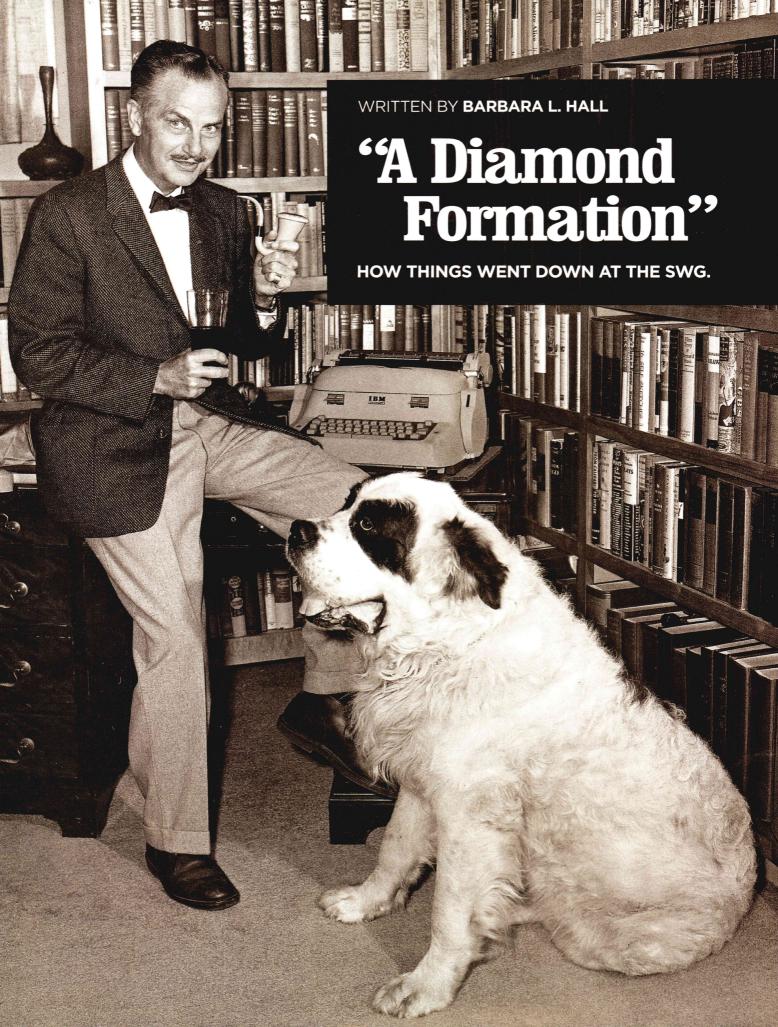
In an interview with Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner published in *Tender Comrades: A Backstory of the Hollywood Blacklist*, Lees recalled that during the train trip from California to Washington, D.C., he strategized with his lawyers and agonized about how he would respond to the Committee's questions, particularly those about his longtime writing partner and friend Fred Rinaldo.

Once on the stand, after he had answered a number of general inquiries about his background and career, the Committee began bombarding Lees with questions about Rinaldo and others. At this point, Lees "felt intimidated enough to declare that this harassment made me feel that I had to seek the protection of the Fifth Amendment, and so, without further ado, I did. Of course, there were more questions that made me look like a very dangerous agent of a foreign power. I would have liked to answer some of the questions, which were outright lies, but my only recourse was to stick with the protection of the Fifth. I was on the hot seat for over an hour and a half."

As a result of his testimony, Robert Lees was blacklisted. He moved to Arizona, where he became the maitre d'at a hotel restaurant; later, he and his wife went into the garment business. Eventually, under the pseudonym J.E. Selby, Robert Lees wrote dozens of scripts for episodic television, including teleplays for Lassie, Rawhide, Alfred Hitchcock Presents, and Flipper. In 1991, Lees donated his scripts, correspondence, and writings to the Academy's Margaret Herrick Library. Included among the papers was his HUAC subpoena.

Screenwriter Bess Taffel described getting her subpoena one evening from HUAC investigator William Wheeler, who sat with her as she recovered from the shock. She remembered telling him: "This is death, you know."

COPY
BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
To U. S. Marshal James J. Boyle and/or W. A. Wheeler and/or J. A. Andrews
You are hereby commanded to summon Robert Lees
742 Shumacher Drive Hollywood, Calif.
to be and appear before theCommittee on Un-American Activities
Committee of the House of Representatives of the United States, of which the Hon.
John S. Wood is chairman,
in their chamber in the city of Washington, on <u>Monday</u>
March 26, 1951
then and there to testify touching matters of inquiry committed to said Committee; and he is
not to depart without leave of said Committee.
Herein fail not, and make return of this summons.
Witness my hand and the seal of the House of Representatives
of the United States, at the city of Washington, this
17 day of <u>February</u> , 19 51
DE SINI
Chairman.
Attest Ralph R. Robert
16—25008-2 Clerk.



n 1951, Screen Writers' Guild president Karl Tunberg, at the direction of the Guild's executive board, contacted the House Un-American Activities Committee chairman by telegram, offering to appear as a friendly witness to prove that the Guild was free of all communist influence. But Guild leadership took it one step further. Not only did the executive board volunteer Tunberg's testimony about the recent history of the Guild, it decided to provide "a complete copy of the minutes and

records of the Screen Writers' Guild" to HUAC.

Even with the records and minutes at their disposal, the Committee members wanted information about the Guild on the record. In September, Tunberg testified before the HUAC subcommittee, which was continuing the investigation of communism in Hollywood. His testimony, reportedly discussed in advance with the HUAC counsel Frank Tavenner, demonstrates how far the Hollywood studios and guilds were willing to go in 1951 to avoid accusations of being soft on communism. Under questioning, Tunberg provided detailed descriptions of the policies and procedures of the union and how the communists were defeated in their supposed quest for control of the Screen Writers' Guild.

Only four years before, many in Hollywood had vigorously resisted HUAC's investigations. In 1947, SWG president Emmet Lavery testified before HUAC and defended the Guild as a democratic labor organization. Lavery emphasized that the union was not dominated by any one political group (while offering no support or assistance to the Guild members being targeted by the committee, including the editor of the Guild magazine, Dalton Trumbo).

But in 1951, Tunberg painted a picture of the Guild as a battleground where the anti-Communist coalition, known as the All-Guild Committee, emerged triumphant. He claimed the communists used various subversive tactics in attempts to take over the Guild. For instance, Tunberg stated that the radical members would seat themselves at meetings in "a diamond formation." Why? "This has a number of advantages for a minority party, which they were," testified Tunberg. "If they want to applaud, or if they want to boo or hiss, it sounds as though twice as many people are doing it, because they are all over the hall rather than in one group."

Tunberg also claimed the leftist members "seduced" well-meaning liberals into voting with them and deliberately delayed meetings in order to pass certain measures after other members had gone home. He attributed any

BE IT RESOLVED that we, members of the Board of the Screen Writers' Guild, affirm our anti-communist position and voluntarily have signed the following oath:

"I AM NOT A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OR AFFIL-TATED WITH SUCH PARTY, AND I DO NOT BELIEVE IN, AND I AM NOT A MEMBER OF, NOR DO I SUFFORT ANY OR-GANIZATION THAT BELIEVES OR TEACHES THE OVERTHROW OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT BY FORCE."

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, deep in the conviction that the Guild is a non-political and a professional organization, we will resist any motion or efforts to impose on the Guild's general membership any loyalty oaths not required by law.

> Signature of Screen Writers Guild Executive Board Member

Dec. 3, 1951

inroads that the communists made in the Guild to apathy on the part of the general membership. But he reassured the Committee that in the end the radicals were never able to foist their left-wing agenda on the Guild or take over the leadership of the organiza-

Tunberg's testimony and the Guild's handling of its "communist problem" were praised by HUAC.

However, Tunberg got mixed reviews back at the Guild, where he was running for a second term as SWG president. In a candidate's statement listing all of the accomplishments of his presidency, Tunberg wrote: "I am proud that the small group of die-hard Kremlinites still left in the Guild are opposed to me. Their attacks on me and on my testimony before the House Committee are a badge of honor."

Two months after testifying, Tunberg lost his reelection bid to Mary McCall Jr. WB

THIS IS IN THE INTERESTS OF THE ELECTION OF KARL TUNBERG FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE SCREEN METTERS' GUILD. ITS MAILING IS FEING PAID FOR BY A GROUP OF THE UNDERSIONED.

Nov. 13th 1951.

Dear Fellow Member:

Like you, we have been receiving many communications during the past few weeks from extremist factions within our Guild.

We believe that our Guild always has made its best progress under the loadership of responsible writers who, despite the obstruction of these extremists, had the courage and good sense to walk the middle of the road.

Karl Tunberg is one of these.

As Secretary and Treasurer, he showed a deep regard for the economic, professional and artistic problems of all writers. As President, he has demonstrated vigorous and progressive leadership.

We are voting for his re-election. We urge you to join us.

Georgo Seaton
Charles Bennett
Leonard Spigelgass
Art Gohn
George Wells
William Lively
Bevertt Freeman
Charles Schnee
Charles Schnee
Berry Trivers
George Proeschel
Jan Lustig
George Proschel
Jan Lustig
George Station
Jan Lustig
George Proeschel
Jan Lustig
George Station
Jan Lustig
George Proeschel
Jan Lustig
George Proeschel
Jan Lustig
Jan Art Arthur Milton Raison

Arthur Orloff Devery Froeman

Jan Lustig Sonya Levien Cap Palmer Dale Eunson Frank Nugent Charles Grayson Charles Lederer

Jo Swerling Joseph Fields Stewart Stern William Ludwig Walter Railly John Twist Garson Kanir Ruth Gordon Marty Rackin Barre Lyndon Elick Moll Monte Brice Ben Roberts Harry Kurnitz Niven Busch

Harry Tugend Ranald MacDougall Ronald Davidson Dwight Babcock Sy Bartlett Milton Krims Andrew Solt
M. W. Rapf
Allen Vincent
Guy Trosper
Robert Pirosh
Arthur Lewis
Earl Baldwin Jonathan Latimer Dane Lussier Joseph Mankiewicz

President Karl Tunberg with the Guild's mascot.

Jarrico Hughes

A WAR FOR CREDIT THAT COULD HAVE ENDED THE SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD.

he battle could have lost the Guild the war.

It all started with a now mostly forgotten RKO movie called *The Las Vegas Story.* In September 1951, a Guild arbitration committee concluded that Paul Jarrico was one of the writers entitled to a credit on the picture, which he had worked on shortly before being fired and subsequently blacklisted for refusing to cooperate with HUAC. The RKO studio, owned and run by the virulent anti-communist Howard Hughes, refused to abide by the Guild's decision and released the film in February 1952 without Jarrico's name on the screen or in advertisements.

Though not as hard-line as Hughes, president Mary Mc-Call Jr. and the Guild leadership were also anti-communists, and they must have been less than thrilled to be defending Jarrico, an outspoken critic of HUAC and the Blacklist. But they strongly believed in the Guild's hard-fought right to decide writing credits—and so had no choice but to go up against Howard Hughes. The Guild informed RKO that it was in violation of the Minimum Basic Agreement.

After weeks of fruitless meetings and discussions, it became obvious that RKO's lawyers were not going to settle the dispute with the Guild or agree to proceed to arbitration as required by the MBA. On March 17, 1952, Hughes and RKO filed suit, asking the court to relieve them of their contractual obligations to Jarrico. What's more, Hughes went public, sanctimoniously announcing to the press that he would never agree to settle the case out of court—and insisting that he was entitled to deny Jarrico his credit because of his refusal to answer questions before HUAC. Hughes' combative anti-Red stance was headline news and loudly endorsed by prominent anti-Communist figures.

A defiant Jarrico countered the lawsuit by announcing that he had previously turned down a cash settlement from the studio and that Hughes committed "a clear violation of my contract with RKO and RKO's contract with the Guild, and I intend to sue the shoes off him." Jarrico indeed filed a countersuit, asking for damages in the amount of \$350,000.

When Hughes demanded in the press that Jarrico answer the question of whether he had ever been a member of the



SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD, INC.

8782 SUNSET BOULEVARD · LOS ANGELES 46, CALIFORNIA · CREStoiew 5-1162

March 29, 1952

ROM THE SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD RECORDS, WRITER!

Mr. Howard Hughes RKO Radio Pictures, Inc. 780 Gower Street Los Angeles 38, Calif.

Sir:

This will reply to your letter of March 27, 1952:

The minimum basic agreement between the Screen Writers' Guild and RKO Radio, signed early last year, stipulates that a writer must receive screen credit for his work, and provides the machinery by which these credits are determined.

In flat contradiction of your published statements, it was established last September by an authorized credit panel that Paul Jarrico was entitled to screen credit on the film in question.

By refusing to grant this credit, RKO Radio has breached its signed contract with the Screen Writers' Guild.

This is clearly a labor dispute. It does not involve the political beliefs of Mr. Jarrico, however repugnant they might be to you or us.

By terms of our corporate charter, by terms of our agreement with RKO Radio and all major motion picture studios, we are obligated to extend Guild membership to, and protect the rights of, any writer you choose to employ.

You chose to employ Mr. Jarrico. We have no choice but to protect his professional rights.

In reply to your direct question regarding a strike: We grant that such action at this time might suit your purposes, since it is a well-known fact that production at RKO now is at a virtual standstill.

However, this question is one for the membership of the Screen. Writers' Guild to decide. Under no circumstances will a strike be called at your suggestion or for your convenience.

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE SCREEN WRITERS: GUILD



Communist Party, Jarrico shot back: "Mr. Hughes had better get it straight. The issue before the court is not whether I have a right to my political opinions, but whether he has a right to set himself above the law. He will find, despite his millions, that the law applies to him as well as to every other American."

The War Between the Statements

At the end of March, Hughes escalated the controversy by sending the Guild an inflammatory letter, which RKO simultaneously leaked to the trades. The next day, *Variety*'s headline blared HUGHES DARES SWG TO STRIKE.

In his letter, Hughes accused the Guild leaders of being soft on communism and ready to go into an "all-out fight" for Jarrico. "Any arbitration of this matter would be without meaning," Hughes declared, "because regardless of what the outcome of the arbitration might be, RKO will not yield to Jarrico's demands."

The Hughes agenda was no longer hidden: His confrontational strategy was designed to force the Guild into a corner where it would have no choice but to strike—a move gaining Hughes publicity and giving him an excuse to stop production at his faltering studio.

The Guild took the high road. In its formal response, signed by president Mary McCall Jr., the executive board dismissed the idea of a strike and reiterated that it was not defending Jarrico and his "repugnant" beliefs but its legal obligation to determine screen credits for all writers. "You chose to employ Mr. Jarrico," the Guild's letter stated. "We have no

choice but to protect his professional rights."

In April, with Hughes' smear campaign still in full swing, the Guild leadership reached the conclusion that it should go to court to compel Hughes and RKO to appoint an arbitrator as required by the basic agreement. Fully expecting to win the motion, the Guild's lawyers were stunned when Superior Court Judge Roy L. Herndon denied their petition.

In his oral opinion, Judge Herndon stated that, "It's an interesting and debatable matter, but the controversy is between the writer and the producer, and the rights of the union are not primarily involved. The language of the arbitration provision of the basic agreement was intended to exclude powers of arbitration over matters of this kind."

Instantly the stakes had been raised to a perilous level: Without credit arbitration authority, the Guild's very existence could be in jeopardy. Calling the decision "shocking and incomprehensible," the Guild immediately filed an appeal, indicating their willingness to take the case all the way to the Supreme Court.

Peace Is Hell

In November 1952, the highly publicized Hughes-Jarrico case went before Superior Court Judge Orlando H. Rhodes. Once again, the fight of the Red-baiting studio head versus the defiant blacklisted writer was front-page news. The delighted press reported every detail of the proceedings.

During his testimony, Hughes claimed that none of Jarrico's work could have ended up in *The Las Vegas Story* because after the writer was banished from the lot, Hughes "gave rigid instructions that every scrap of paper that Jarrico laid a hand to be tossed into a waste basket and burned." According to press accounts, Hughes became defensive as he fended off questions about whether he was using the communist "threat" as an excuse for slowing down production at RKO—but laughed at queries about how the writer couldn't possibly bring worse publicity.

Jarrico's lawyers also called Frances Inglis, the SWG Executive Secretary, to testify about the credit arbitration process. During cross-examination, however, RKO's attorney went in a different direction. Quoting from negative reviews of *The Las Vegas Story*, he asked Inglis why a screenwriter would even want a credit on what was clearly an inferior movie. A bit nonplussed, Inglis was forced to explain to the court how important it is for writers to get credit for all of their work, regardless of the quality of the final film.

After a weeklong bench trial, Judge Rhodes unequivocally sided with Hughes and RKO, and found that the Guild had no standing in the credit fight. He stated that Jarrico had violated the morals clause of his employment contract when he invoked the Fifth Amendment and refused to answer HUAC's questions, noting that this made Jarrico an "object of public disgrace, obloquy, ill will, and ridicule."

Hughes and RKO were allowed to ignore the studio's agreements with both a writer and his Guild and deny Jarrico his credit on *The Las Vegas Story*.

In the meantime, the Guild had continued to pursue the

RKO matter in the courts, hoping it could secure a reversal of Judge Herndon's damaging decision. But appeals to both the District Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court of California were denied.

Would other producers take advantage of the flaws in the basic agreement that had been exposed in Judge Herndon's oral opinion? Why would writers pay dues to an organization that could not fight for their right to a credit? Eventually the question could be: Why be in the Guild?

Surrounded by hostile courts and the press, besieged by HUAC, the producers and studios smelling blood, the Guild's leadership had no choice but to seek a truce. They approached the Association of Motion Picture Producers and, after a series of meetings, a proposal was drafted and approved by the Guild's executive board. The Producers Association agreed to renegotiate the arbitration clause of the basic agreement, but only if the Guild would approve the addition of a clause permitting producers the right to deny credit to writers linked to communism.

A Bitter Armistice

On April 22, 1953, a special Guild membership meeting was called at the Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood, with the settlement of the RKO lawsuit on the agenda. Gordon Stulberg, the Guild's lawyer, reviewed the case and presented the proposal, which had been mailed to the members for review a few weeks earlier. In order to "foreclose any future decision similar to the one handed down in the RKO suit," the members were asked to approve a modification of the wording of the arbitration clause of the basic agreement. In exchange, the Guild would add an amendment to the credits provision allowing producers to withhold credit from any writer who admitted to being or having been a communist or who refused to answer questions about Party membership.

According to the official minutes, there was a discussion and numerous questions were raised before the vote; according to the unedited minutes, recently discovered in the Writers Guild Foundation Library's archives, "Opponents of the matter expressed their views." No detailed description of the discussion or the views of the opponents has been found, though a *Variety* article at the time reported that the issue was "heatedly debated," with some "writers opposing the plan on grounds it would protect the producer more than the writer."

In the end it couldn't have surprised anyone when the measure passed with a vote of 242-61. No matter what side of the blacklisting issue the members were on, the threat of losing the right to determine credits was too much of a risk for the Guild to take—even if it meant granting producers the power to deny a writer credit because of his or her political beliefs.

The anti-communist amendment that went into effect in April 1953 helped hold the Blacklist in place, however. And the Guild board's loyalty oath mandate—which Ring Lardner Jr. dubbed "The Jarrico Resolution"—remained in effect until 1973, a reminder of a time when writers, and their credits, and their union, were under attack.

Jarrico Hughes

Howard Hughes was one of many anticommunist zealots during the McCarthy Era. But his was the most powerful voice emanating from Hollywood, thanks to his immense wealth and leadership of RKO. Hughes ruled the film studio in dictatorial fashion, trampling the rights of many workers, including Paul Jarrico. Determined "to make RKO one studio where the work of communist sympathizers will not be used," he had the names of several individuals removed from the credits of reissued films because of their alleged communist leanings. He even ordered parts of Slaughter Trail (1951) reshot to eliminate tainted actor Howard Da Silva from the cast. Naturally. Hughes also felt compelled to produce movies that bludgeoned the commies in ham-fisted fashion. I Married a Communist, a melodramatic stew about a former Party member (Robert Ryan) forced by Marxist heavies to compromise his position as a shipping executive on the San Francisco waterfront, was the first of these. Test runs did not go well, so Hughes changed the release title to The Woman on Pier 13—an interesting choice as there was no Pier 13, much less a woman on it, in the movie. The new title didn't help; the film lost \$650,000.

—Richard B. Jewell

Richard B. Jewell is is the author of *RKO Radio Pictures: A Titan Is Born* and *Slow Fade to Black: The Decline of RKO Radio Pictures*. A professor in the School of Cinematic Arts, where he holds the Hugh M. Hefner Chair for the Study of American Film, he was recently named an Academy Film Scholar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.









UNDER COMMUNISM!

This anti-communist comic was published in 1947 and distributed as a "public service" by the Catechetical Guild Educational Society, a Catholic organization. In 1949, the publisher contacted IATSE's Roy Brewer, who wanted 8,000 copies to distribute to union members, but the funding fell though. Its preface begins: IS THIS TOMORROW is published for one purpose — TO MAKE YOU THINK! It concludes: The average American is prone to say, "It Can't Happen Here." Millions of people in other countries used to say the same thing. Today, they are dead—or living in Communist slavery. IT MUST NOT HAPPEN HERE!

FOR INSTANCE, WE DRAG MEETINGS BUT THE PARTY MEMBERS GO HOME ..."







A Noble Band of Outlaws

FINDING ESCAPE AND REFUGE IN THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD.

pproach any British person born in the aftermath of World War II, make a casual reference to the TV series The Adventures of Robin Hood, and there's a strong chance you'll be treated to a word-perfect rendition of the show's rousing, infectious title song:

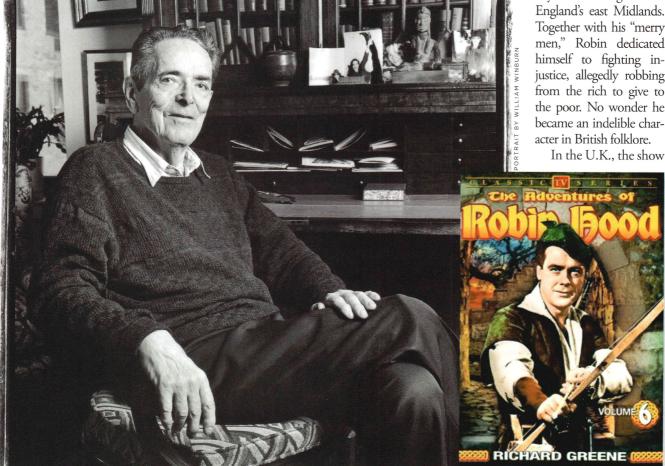
Robin Hood, Robin Hood, riding through the glen, Robin Hood, Robin Hood, with his band of men, Feared by the bad, loved by the good, Robin Hood! Robin Hood! Robin Hood!

During the second half of the 1950s, in the part of England where I grew up, every child knew this song by heart; it was a perennial playground favorite.

The show itself was an enormous hit, a jewel in the crown of ITV, Britain's first commercial television network and a new rival to the hitherto all-powerful BBC. Robin Hood made its debut on a Sunday evening in September 1955, during the first weekend ITV broadcast to the nation. Shrewdly designed to appeal to children alongside their parents, it aired at 5:30 P.M. on Sunday—the ideal timeslot for families.

The series was based on the supposed exploits of Robin Hood, a legendary 12th-century outlaw loosely modeled on a historic character, a knight named Robin of Locksley. Robin Hood lived

> with his followers in Sherwood Forest, near the city of Nottingham in England's east Midlands. Together with his "merry men," Robin dedicated himself to fighting injustice, allegedly robbing from the rich to give to the poor. No wonder he became an indelible char-



ran for 143 half-hour episodes over four seasons. Its success was replicated in the U.S., where it ran from 1955 to 1958, airing on CBS on Monday nights at 7:30 when that slot counted as primetime. The show made a star of swashbuckling Richard Greene in the title role and featured such distinguished British actors as Alan Wheatley as Robin's arch-rival, the greedy Sheriff of Nottingham, and Donald Pleasance as the unpopular tyrant King John. *The Adventures of Robin Hood* was well-liked and well-regarded; ITV was more than happy with it, and so were British and American audiences.

But an undercover element to the show—a secret few people knew at the time—might have been the key to its success. Certainly the secret element contributed to the stories: Many of *Robin Hood's* scripts were by American screenwriters who had been blacklisted in their own country for communist or leftist sympathies. Even in England, the episodes had to be credited under pseudonyms, many selecting ordinary British names to avoid a HUAC subpoena and potential deportation.

All this remarkable subterfuge remains, six decades later, largely forgotten. Even in *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund's magisterial 500-page account of the Blacklist era (published in 1980), it rates just one brief mention.

Taking From the Rich

Some of *Robin Hoods* blacklisted writers had enjoyed stellar careers before the House Un-American Activities Committee cracked down on leftists in the motion picture industry. Panicked U.S. film and television industries were shunning the work of those who refused to blackmail their colleagues and associates. Two of the Hollywood Ten, Ring Lardner Jr. (*Woman of the Year*) and writer-producer Adrian Scott (*Crossfire*), wrote for *Robin Hood*.

Lardner co-wrote the show's first episode, "The Coming of Robin Hood." Eight years previously, Lardner had already proved to be the most heroically insolent of all the HUAC-designated "unfriendly witnesses." In 1947, quizzed about his Communist Party membership and urged to inform on colleagues and friends, he memorably replied: "I could answer, but if I did, I would hate myself in the morning."

Waldo Salt, who later won screenwriting Academy Awards for *Midnight Cowboy* and *Coming Home*, contributed six episodes to *Robin Hood* as Arthur Behr.

Howard Koch (*Casablanca*) wrote for the show under the pseudonym "Peter Howard" and "Anne Rodney" when working on scripts with his wife, Anne. Koch also did a stint as a script editor for the series.

British-born Ian McLellan Hunter had won an Academy Award for *Roman Holiday* by fronting the actual screenwriter Dalton Trumbo, then found himself blacklisted later. He and Lardner became writing partners on *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, typically using the pseudonyms Lawrence McClellan or Eric Heath.

Robert Lees, who had written comedies for Abbott and

Ring Lardner Jr. (left) co-wrote the series first episode, "The Coming of Robin Hood."

Costello, contributed an unspecified number of *Robin Hood* episodes. His preferred nom de plume for the series was John Dyson, though this popular pseudonym apparently got shared by other blacklisted writers, as was a "Leslie Poynton," used by Scott and by others.

Overall, as many as 22 blacklisted writers made contributions to *Robin Hood*. British film academic Steve Neale, now at Exeter University, has researched the real names behind the show's credits. He's concluded that Norma Barzman (*Never Say Goodbye*) and Maurice Rapf (*Song of the South*) also contributed episodes. Barzman reportedly claimed to have written an episode called "Queen Eleanor." If so, her pseudonym was Paul Symonds—another choice that appears not to have been hers alone.

It seems clear that spreading pseudonyms around to be used by various writers was a means of covering their tracks. Of course, the practice makes it that much harder to establish exactly how many blacklisted writers were involved in *Robin Hood*; what's remarkable is the fact that their involvement stayed a secret for so long.

The Adventures of Robin Hood proved the perfect arena for blacklisted writers to devise stories colored and enriched by their own experiences. In retrospect, this is not so surprising. Robin is a hero who acts against injustice. Robin and his outlaw band stand up for common people against the whims of powerful, greedy men, and all are committed to the redistribution of wealth. These were themes that resonated with the blacklisted writers. It was hardly a stretch for them to identify as outlaws, though of a different kind.

And so the series became a Trojan horse—a means of smuggling left-liberal ideas and values into its storylines. It might not have been true for every episode written by the American writers, but certain stories have unmistakable parallels with their experiences during the ugly era of McCarthyism.

The first season features an episode in which Friar Tuck, the outlaws' spiritual leader, is arrested and hauled away to be judged by a presiding archbishop—although he's committed no crime. Many stories are shot through with themes of duplicity and betrayal. People apparently sympathetic to the outlaw band enter the story, gain their confidence, then turn the knowledge gleaned against them. Others inform on the outlaws, their whereabouts and plans, to gain advantage or reward. The parallels to the McCarthy era are obvious: the random nature of accusations, the betrayals by apparent friends, the general air of fear and distrust.

Giving to the Poor

The prime mover and heroine in establishing *The Adventures of Robin Hood* as a haven for blacklisted writers was Hannah Weinstein, an American producer who moved to London in the 1950s. There she set up a company called Sapphire Films, and used it to develop a number of costume adventure series, of which *Robin Hood* was the first, crafted to appeal both to American and British audiences. Weinstein got involved with an American company, Official Films, which became the show's U.S. syndicator. The fledgling ITV network was intrigued by

Script supervisor Albert Ruben stressed the need for absolute secrecy about the writers' identities, noting that it would have been a scandal had this innocent, popular TV series been revealed as a haven for radical dissidents. He was right.

Weinstein's proposals and helped finance them. Lew Grade (later Lord Grade), one of Britain's best-known TV executives, put money into the venture.

There was a clear logic in Weinstein's decision to use blacklisted American writers. First, she was already acquainted personally with many of them. In her younger days she had been a journalist for Hearst newspapers but gravitated leftward, assisting two Roosevelt reelection campaigns in the 1940s, then working as an organizer for the Anti-Nazi League and Progressive Citizens of America. Her prominence in the latter group enabled her to meet several screenwriters who ended up being blacklisted.

An even more pressing reason was the depth of talent. Lardner, Salt, and Koch were at the top of their profession. All the blacklisted screenwriters had carved out a niche in Hollywood's intensely rarefied studio system.

And finally, they came relatively cheap. In terms of writers' remuneration in the 1950s, TV was a poor relation to movies. But everyone on the Blacklist was effectively prevented from working in any capacity—at least under their own names. Deprived of a living, most were prepared to take whatever work came their way.

Some blacklisted writers actually relocated to Britain, including Koch, Scott, and Donald Ogden Stewart (*The Philadelphia Story*). On weekends Stewart's home in Hampstead, north Lon-

don, became an informal salon for blacklisted film professionals.

But not all American writers in London at this time were involved with the *Robin Hood* series. Carl Foreman wrote *High Noon*, widely regarded as an allegory about Mc-Carthyism (though intriguingly, not by its director Fred Zinnemann), then left the U.S. for Britain shortly before its release after being branded "an unfriendly witness" by HUAC for his refusal to name names. In England, Foreman worked with Michael G. Wilson, yet another blacklisted

writer. They adapted *The Bridge on the River Kwai* from Pierre Boulle's novel. Their adaptation won an Academy Award, but they received no screen credit for it. (The Academy awarded each their Oscars posthumously in 1984.)

Director-writer Joseph Losey eventually enjoyed the most fruitful period of his career after moving to Britain in 1952 to escape a subpoena. But during his initial years as a fugitive, Losey was restricted to B-movies and second-rate projects. He wrote under the pseudonyms "Joseph Walton" (his two given names) and "Victor Hanbury."

Other *Robin Hood* writers, even though exiled from Hollywood, remained in the United States, including Lardner and Hunter, based in New York. Some of this latter group were unable to obtain passports and thus could not travel abroad. Although they still managed to write for *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, the logistics of doing so were cumbersome and time-consuming.

Albert G. Ruben, the show's script supervisor for its first two seasons, worked alongside Weinstein and producer Sidney Cole in London. Ruben explained how their process worked during an interview in 1998 by film studies academic David Marc. According to Ruben, the trio would meet in London once an episode's outline was received from the writing team of Lardner and Hunter. The three executives would discuss the outline while Ruben took notes, then he'd type them up and return these to the writers in New York by air mail. It was effectively a story conference—without the actual writers being present. Successive drafts of episodes would go back and forth across the Atlantic, a process that now seems impossibly slow and unwieldy. But waiting in England, Koch was usually on hand to polish Lardner and Hunter's scripts.

Ruben observed of Weinstein that "refugees from McCarthy were available to her. That, in fact, became the source of her success. She had access to blacklisted writers. She was actually acquainted with a lot of those guys. Many of them were successful [but] ideally wouldn't have worked in TV." He described the general level of contributions as "high-quality writing."

Ruben also stressed the need for absolute secrecy about the writers' identities, noting that it would have been a scandal had this innocent, popular TV series been revealed as a ha-

ven for radical dissidents. He was right. To this end, Hannah Weinstein insisted that knowledge of the identities of the blacklisted writers should stay solely between herself and Ruben. And Ruben could not even declare his knowledge of their names to them while he was handling their scripts. "They must not know I knew," he recalled. For their part, they never committed their real names to a copy of their screenplays: Lardner and Hunter used to sign their scripts "WS/FT," the initials of two characters from Robin

Hood's outlaw band, Will Scarlett and Friar Tuck.

There's plenty of evidence that the scripts contained oblique social commentary. One episode detailed the story of crippling property taxes being imposed on poor serfs. In another, a village



woman is persecuted by the authorities for allegedly consorting with the devil; what followed was literally a witch hunt.

Then there is an episode in which Robin defends a Jewish banker and his daughter from powerful men illegally trying to dispossess them—a storyline clearly influenced by the anti-Semitism prevalent in the U.S. at the time, exemplified by the infamous *Rosenberg* case. There is a reference to "a ship bearing Jewish refugees who have lost their homes, and they have to find new ones." And a rich, powerful character complains: "Surely my lord, the idea of a whole shipload of these people coming here with their foreign, un-English ways is as intolerable to you, as it is to every right-thinking person."

Britain may have been more comfortable an environment than the United States for those blacklisted, but some still felt discreetly hounded. According to Losey's biographer David Caute, the writer-director was troubled to find his work permits in Britain extended by the passport office for only a few weeks at a time. He resorted to seeking out smaller consulates (Glasgow, Scotland rather than London) for renewals, on the hunch officials there would know less about his controversial past.

Yet the American writers' colony in London found friends, some in high places. Leftist politicians, including Aneurin Bevan (formerly a government minister) and Michael Foot (a future Labor Party leader), were on cordial terms with them. (However, in Losey's case, two Conserva-

tive lawmakers, Leslie Plummer and Walter Monckton, intervened to save him from potential deportation.)

In Sherwood Forest

Then as now, fear sells. The British media was constantly on alert for scandalous "Red Scare" stories. This had been true since the early 1950s, when two British government Intelligence officers, Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, defected to Moscow after having passed secrets to the Soviets. And the U.K. press's distrust of Russia had escalated yet again in 1956, with the Soviet invasion of Hungary. Within this Cold War context, the screenwriters' involvement with *Robin Hood* would indeed have been regarded as scandalous, so it was crucial to maintain their secret identities.

Weinstein took the confidentiality issue seriously. She had set up Sapphire Films in offices in London's Cadogan Square and reportedly instructed employees to refuse delivery of any letters or documents if it was unclear who had sent them. This was to preempt any chance of her or anyone else in the company receiving a subpoena from U.S. authorities.

Weinstein and her colleagues went to great lengths. Ruben recalled that once *Robin Hood* became a success, enthusiastic ITV executives and satisfied ad agency people were eager to meet its creators. They visited Cadogan Square to meet Weinstein's team and take a tour, during which all questions about the writers went deftly unanswered.

British journalist Tom Dewe Mathews, who has written often about the Blacklist, reported that Hal Hackett, president of Official Films, also insisted on meeting some or any of the people who wrote *Robin Hood*. On Hackett's arrival to the office, he was introduced to Peggy Phillips, an American script editor for Sapphire. She charmed him, effectively playing a front for screenwriters who had to remain invisible and unknown. Even investor Lew

Grade, it is agreed, had no idea what was really going on in the creation of ITV's first substantial hit, despite funding the show and guiding its trans-Atlantic success.

So the deception worked. *Robin Hood* flourished and Weinstein, sensing she had sparked the public's imagination for the genre, swiftly introduced three more costume adventure series within the space of two years (1956-1958) under Sapphire's banner: *The Adventures of Sir Lancelot, The Buccaneers*, and *Sword of Freedom*. Lardner and Hunter, among other blacklistees, wrote for *Lancelot* and *Buccaneers*.

By the time these later shows were established, Senator McCarthy was publicly disgraced and "communist witch hunts" started to slink back into America's unconscious. Historians began uncovering the era's shameful secrets. Yet the saga of blacklisted screenwriters creating *The Ad-*

ventures of Robin Hood never quite became common currency.

Their story is known in Britain by professionals within the film industry but remains unfamiliar to the general public except for a few exceptions. In 1991, British writer Michael Eaton's *Fellow Traveller* aired on BBC TV, received a small theatrical release, and was seen in America on HBO. Ron Silver starred as a writer about to testify before HUAC, who leaves for Britain and writes for a TV series about Robin Hood. But while the film was well received, it made little commercial impact.

So why isn't the dramatic story better known? One can surmise various explanations. Maybe the principals involved (almost all dead now) hesitated to declare their roles as writers on the series because they were simply accustomed to remaining silent. Maybe there was an element of superstition about the secrecy: If they talked openly, perhaps the toxic climate of those bad old days would come back. Or maybe it was just a distressing, wearying period in their lives they were reluctant to revisit.

All those reasons would be perfectly understandable. A pity, though, because it remains a great story: a band of noble outlaws, writing stories undercover about another band of noble outlaws. You can't make this stuff up.

—Additional research by Jan Buchanan



Memories a Salt Mine

WHAT THE BLACKLIST MISSED, HE WITNESSED.

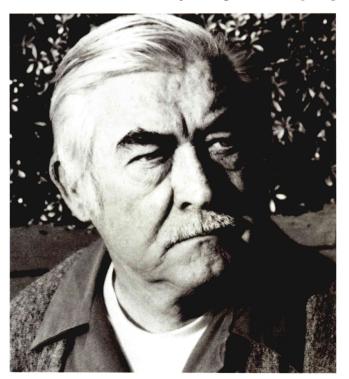
"The film was made by blacklisted people. They had formed an independent company on the theory that, though blacklisted, they were not going to stop making films. They would do a film outside the aegis of Hollywood and beyond its control. Something that was an honest portrayal of working class life in America."

-Michael Wilson, screenwriter of Salt of the Earth

ore dangerous than *I Married a Communist*. More insidious than *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. The American Legion called for a nationwide boycott of the film. Processing labs were told not to work on the film. Unionized projectionists were instructed not to show the film.

Of the thousands and thousands of theaters in the United States, all but 12 refused to screen the film.

The official boycott lasted 10 years for *Salt of the Earth*—the only film in American movie history to be officially censored. Its sins? Pro-labor. Empowering women. Exposing



corporate lies. Equating Hispanic employees with Anglos. Appealing for equal pay and equal rights. Asking for safe working conditions and... Well, its crimes go on and on.

Roughly 35 years after the production of *Salt of the Earth* in 1953, I invited longtime friend Jules Schwerin to participate in a special Hollywood film project I was organizing at Saint Mary's College of California. There I was a tenured professor in the English Department.

I had met Jules and Doris Schwerin in the late '40s when, to earn supplemental income, I house- and babysat for many of the film-people I met during Salka Viertel's Sunday salons in Santa Monica. Trying to write my own fiction, I was not only respected by the Schwerins, I was treated as an equal, a confidante, a fellow artist. We discussed the most demanding and insider complications of Hollywood art and its politics, plus my own art and current politics. During those Hollywood years, the Schwerins and I became family.

Jules had served as production manager and assistant to Paul Jarrico, producer of *Salt of the Earth*. No surprise that the major subject for most of our always-intense discussions was *Salt of the Earth*.

Union Made

Salt of the Earth is one of the first American films to realistically dramatize feminist and sociopolitical points-of-view. Its plot focuses on a real and long miners' strike in 1950 against Empire Zinc in New Mexico. From those picket lines, the producers and director cast Hispanic miners and their families, creating an authentic docudrama.

In the film the issues of greatest importance to the striking miners include health and safety and wage-equity with Anglo workers. The character Ramon Quintero (professional actor Juan Chacon) helps organize the strike even though at home he scorns and all but beats his wife, Esperanza (the Mexican professional actor Rosaura Revueltas). His wife is reluctant at first to assert her rights as woman, wife, and union organizer but soon commits to all three.

It is in their homes and at the Union hall that Esperanza and her women colleagues finally convince their men that

The only film in American movie history to be officially censored, Salt of the Earth, written by Michael Wilson (left) was banned for 10 years.

they should be allowed to join and strengthen the all-male picket lines.

Even during production the film was blacklisted, both locally and nationally. Objections began at first because the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers Union had helped finance the production after being kicked out of the CIO in 1949 for being "a left-wing union." When it was announced that the writer of the film would be the blacklisted Michael Wilson and the director would be Herbert Biberman, the entire country took note. Biberman had refused to answer the House Committee on Un-American Activities about Communist Party affiliation, and then, like others of the Hollywood Ten, had been imprisoned. Unrepentant and not intimidated, the first film he chose to direct after release from jail was Salt of the Earth.

Salt Licks

The degredation of American values that occurred in the "Red Scare" years, exemplified by attempts to bury *Salt of the Earth*, are difficult to imagine today, at least by those who weren't there. But those inquisitions are difficult to forgot for those of us who were there. Scenes and stories help re-create it, a little. So please indulge this 92-year-old while I recall a few incidents from my early 20s. A novice writer still reeling from visions of liberated concentra-

tion camps, I paid close attention and learned from the best. And for a brave few, the Blacklist brought out their best.

During the years I house- and child-sat for the liberal Schwerins, I performed the same duties for conservatives Roberta and Albert Wohlstetter. (Among other achievements, Albert was responsible for a U.S. government foundation based in Santa Monica called the Rand Corporation.) The Wohlstetters and the Schwerins had been Hollywood Hills neighbors for many years and, though at opposite ends of the political stick, they respected and even on occasion entertained each other.

During the time *Salt of the Earth* was being produced, I was invited to join both families for dinner at the Wohlstetter's home.

In the middle of the meal, the phone rang.

Albert answered. He and the caller talked for a few minutes and then, his voice loud and strong, Albert said, "You are warning *me*?"

Salt of the Earth

Screenplay by Michael Wilson

FADE IN (before titles)

EXT., QUINTERO BACKYARD. MEDIUM SHOT, DAY.

A woman at work chopping wood. Though her back is to the CAMERA, we sense her weariness in toil by the set of her shoulders. A five-year-old girl is helping the woman, gathering kindling. Over this scene comes the first title. A guitar dominates the musical theme. The motif is grave, nostalgic.

EXT., QUINTERO BACKYARD. A SERIES OF SHOTS, DAY.

As successive titles appear, each is matched by a view of the woman at her chores. Though at no time do see her face, we begin to gather that she is large with child. The woman carries the load of wood to an outdoor fire, staggering under its weight, the little girl following with a box of kindling... The woman feeds wood into the fire, on top of which is a washtub... She scrubs clothes in the tub, bowed to the work, the little girl watching. She wrings out articles of clothing, hanging them on a clothesline, the

EXT., QUINTERO BACKYARD. MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT, DAY.

As the last title fades, the woman continues hanging the wash and for the first time we see her face: a mask of suppression, a chiseled yet eroded beauty, the eyes hooded, smoldering. At the same time, though her lips do not move, we hear her voice: grave, nostalgic, cadenced, like the music of the guitar, inflecting the melody of Mexican-American speech.

WOMAN'S VOICE How shall I begin my story that has no beginning?

MEDIUM FULL SHOT.

The clothes billowing in the wind as the woman hangs them up.

WOMAN'S VOICE
My name is Esperanza, Esperanza Quintero.
I am a miner's wife.

We could hear Albert's breathing rise as he listened. "Yes," he announced, "Jules Schwerin is a damn Lefty. But Jules Schwerin is also a damn loyal and loving American. So stop harassing Jules Schwerin."

After a pause: "Of course I know whom I am talking to. And, incidentally, it is *whom*, not *who*. I am talking to the FBI."

He slapped the phone into its wall-mount and turned to Jules. "There. You've ruined any chance I will appreciate my wife's dessert. Satisfied?"

A Reluctant Spy

I met Alfred Hayes at one of Salka Viertel's Sunday salons. During the war he had also served in Europe in the U.S. Army, but with the Special Services known as the "morale division" in Rome. When the war ended, Hayes stayed in Italy and wrote neorealist films for the likes of Roberto Rosselini and Vittorio De Sica, earning two Academy Award nomina-

"This picture is deliberately designed to inflame racial hatred and to depict the United States of America as the enemy of all colored peoples. I shall do everything in my power to prevent the showing of this Communistmade film in the theaters of America."

—Congressman Donald Jackson (D., Calif.) House of Representatives speech, 1953

tions and contributing to *The Bicycle Thief*. Hayes was 10 or 15 years older than me and already famous when we met, and about to become even more so for his ballad "Joe Hill" (to be made eternally famous by Joan Baez, Earl Robinson, and Paul Robeson).

Hayes invited me several times to his Hollywood apartment for discussions about the Holocaust. He wanted to write about the Germans, but his war experiences had occurred in Italy and my experiences had been in Germany. He quite openly envied me my participation in the liberation of Dachau.

"I want to write a script for women, Chester, and about women," he said during one of our evenings. "But I'm a man. Every woman I meet here in Hollywood wants me to fall in love with them so I will get them an actress job. I have this need to write about women who hate me, but it turns out they all love me. So, to get the vocabulary and the voice correct for what I will write, I have a plan. You want to help me? I'll pay you."

"You don't have to pay me, Al. I'd love to be in on this plan. Don't forget, I want to be a writer, too, when I grow up. So I'll call it a learning experience. What is it?"

"What are you doing next weekend?"

"Salka Viertel, Sunday afternoon."

"Can you be here Saturday morning? Around 10? After breakfast? We will listen to it together."

"Listen to what?"

"I'll tell you Saturday morning."

Saturday morning I drove from Santa Monica to Hollywood, arriving at Alfred Hayes' apartment a little after 10. We sat at the kitchen table, which had been cleared. On the table: pencils and pads of unmarked paper. "In case you want to make notes," Al explained.

On a smaller table near the kitchen table, a complicated radio and recording apparatus. "Learned how to use all these mikes and this recording equipment in Italy. From De Sica."

"What the hell's going to be recorded?"

"It's recorded already. Last night. Three women. I'd invited them to drinks and dinner. I wasn't here, but I'd left the door unlocked. I knew they'd all three eat and drink whatever there was. And I was right. When I got back here about midnight, they were gone and all the food and wine gone and the sink was filled with dirty dishes."

Al had hidden six microphones at six places in the apartment. "I recorded all their conversations about me. They didn't have the slightest idea they were being recorded."

"How do you know it's about you if you haven't heard it yet?"

"They're women. They're each one in love with the same man. Me. What else would they talk about? I bet I can use 98 percent of everything recorded in my novel and movie. Oh yeah, the three women are all movie actresses. I bet the 2 percent that's not about Alfred Hayes will be about famous actors."

He flipped a switch and I heard three distinct, theatrically trained women's voices. After confessing disappointment at Alfred for having forgotten his invitations that night, the three women began drinking and eating. "We can leave the dishes for Alfred," one said. "He hates to do dishes," and the women laughed. And talked.

I sat listening to nothing but condemnation of a Holly-wood psychotherapist all three women had been seeing for many months. I knew the therapist's name, of course. He was hated by every visitor to Salka Viertel's salons because he informed patients that if they knew names of Hollywood Communists, they should give those names to the House Un-American Activities Committee. "Patriotism," he told his patients, "is the best therapy for the worst mental illnesses."

For perhaps an hour and a half, they talked about the evil therapist who recently succeeded in convincing his patient Dorothy Comingore, the famous star of Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*, into testifying before the House Committee on un-American Activities.

Yes, the famous and brilliant and beautiful and talented and selfless Dorothy Comingore testified the day before but had refused to name names of anyone in Hollywood who was a member of the Communist Party and, after the hearing, had drunk herself into a stupor. She had almost killed herself driving home.

The *Hollywood Reporter* would surely run the entire story the next day, including the drunken car crash.

On the recording we heard the actresses express only admiration for Dorothy Comingore, who had ruined her chances for even an hour's future employment in the world she loved. The actresses said that every person who had any connection with abusing Dorothy Comingore deserved the most painful and pervasive punishment possible. God would see that it happened.

From the tape-recorder we heard, "God will bless Dorothy Comingore forever."

Last statement recorded: "She already has. Thank you, God." It was heartbreaking to hear. There would be no exploitation of this material for fiction. While I watched, Alfred Hayes destroyed the recorded material.

The next day, at the Sunday salon at Salka's house, many tears were shed for the inevitable fate awaiting Dorothy

Comingore. Orson Welles, who had helped make Dorothy Comingore famous, wasn't present.

Charlie Chaplin, who had also helped make Dorothy Comingore famous, was present. He wept openly, without the slightest shame.

The Truth Will Out

Twenty-five years ago, Jules Schwerin took my phone call in New York and, fascinated by my campus project, agreed to take a long-anticipated vacation to visit his old friend in California. Yes, he would be delighted to meet with students and "others" at a public presentation to answer any and all questions about Hollywood in the 1950s—especially questions about *Salt of the Earth*.

When I proposed that I also invite

our star Rosaura Revueltas, Jules reminded me that during the production of *Salt* she had been banished to Mexico by the U.S. government and barred from reentry—forever. Her voiceover and extra scenes had to be done in secret, even in Mexico.

When I screened the film in the St. Mary's college auditorium, among the faculty members and campus neighbors were 20 students from each of my three classes. Every semester St. Mary's was welcoming more and more Hispanic students, the majority young men and women from Los Angeles. They were one reason for such intense interaction between the audience and Jules, interactions that went on for more than two hours after the film ended.

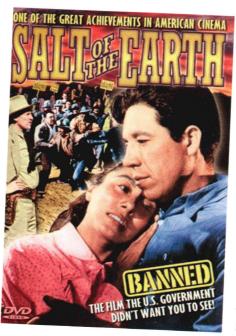
I recall two representative exchanges.

Question from a student: "Why was this film called *sub-versive*?"

Jules: "This film was called subversive because the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers sponsored it and many blacklisted Hollywood movie professionals helped produce it. The Union for Mine, Mill, and Smelter had been expelled from the CIO in 1950 for its alleged—I repeat: *alleged*—Communist-dominated leadership. Several [filmmakers] had also been members of the Hollywood Ten and sent to prison. The director of the film, Herbert Biberman, was one of the Hollywood Ten."

Question from a professor: "Wasn't Biberman, like others, sent to prison because they had refused to answer the House Committee on Un-American Activities charges of Communist sympathy and support?"

Jules: "Biberman, like the others, was cited and convicted for contempt of Congress and jailed. He was held in the Federal Correctional Institution at Texarkana for six months. After his release, he directed the film. The completed film was



denounced by the U.S. House of Representatives for its so-called—I repeat: *so-called*—Communist sympathies. The FBI investigated the financing. Film processing labs were told not to work on the film and union projectionists were instructed not to show it. After opening night in New York City, the film lay dormant for 10 years, stored for safekeeping in a wooden shack in Los Angeles."

The morning after the screening, I arrived at St. Mary's to find about 10 students, all Hispanic, standing in the hallway by my office door. They were there to thank me for showing the film and for the post-film discussion. They had also come in support of one student who pleaded with me to bring the film to the hall of his father's union in Los Angeles and show it to members of the Field Workers Union. Jules, staying with me in my Berkeley apartment,

was delighted with the opportunity. The next day I drove us to Los Angeles.

The Union hall where the film was to be shown was more than prepared for us, packed with a standing-room-only crowd. From beginning to end, the workers watched the film in a mix of almost reverential silence with bursts of applause and cheers.

When the miner's women convinced their men that they, the women, ought to walk the picket line, every woman in the audience in the Union hall stood and applauded. When Esperanza raised her fist to defy her husband who was threatening to strike her, shouting, "No! Never again!"—every woman in the hall leaped to her feet and waved their fists in the air and cheered.

So did many men.

So did Jules and Chester.

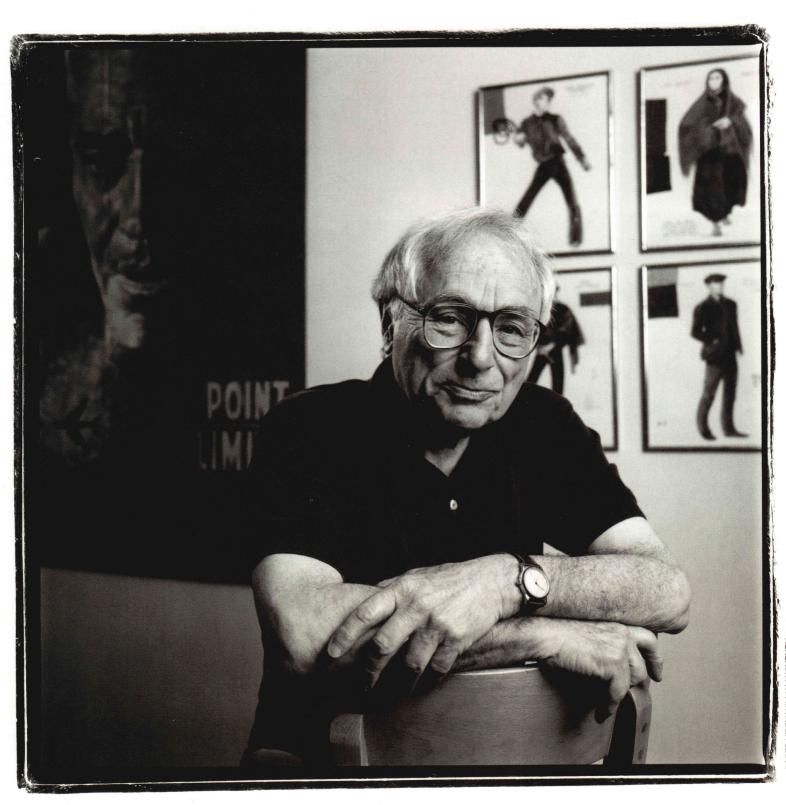
Almost everyone connected with *Salt of the Earth* has died or is approaching death.

Esperanza and Ramon, the film's two major characters, will live forever, thanks to the Hollywood Ten and their allies and thanks to the United States government.

Jules and Doris Schwerin lived long enough to see *Salt of the Earth* receive The Crystal Globe Award for Best Picture (1954) at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (Czechoslovakia), win the International Grand Prize (1955) at the Academie du Cinema de Paris, and be formally preserved by the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

And they lived long enough to witness *Salt's* addition to the National Film Registry for being "culturally, historically, and aesthetically significant."

Salt of the Earth is the only movie in film history to be censored by the United States government. And it's one of only 100 films to be preserved for posterity by the Library of Congress. Both achievements are claims to fame.



Up Front

WALTER BERNSTEIN REMEMBERS THE 24/7 SURVEILLANCE THAT LED TO SCRIPTING A BLACKLIST CLASSIC.

In the world of political movies, if not all of actual politics, paranoia is an enduring plot device—the less defined the threat, the better. No one knows this as intimately as screenwriter Walter Bernstein. He's living proof that paranoia is rooted in reality.

Witness to a dark time when the FBI rooted through his trash looking for evidence of a homegrown Communist plot, the screenwriter is periodically asked to speak about just such a time and just such a film.

"What I like about it is it still has legs," Bernstein says of *The Front*, which earned him an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay in 1976 and was directed by Martin Ritt, Bernstein's old friend and tennis partner.

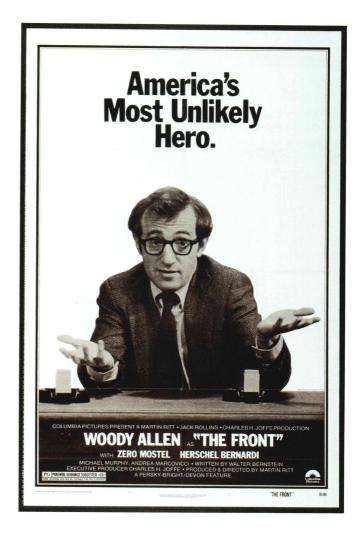
In the 1950s, after Bernstein's name showed up in the notorious publication *Red Channels*, Ritt helped keep Bernstein in a little bit of money by sliding him TV work. Ultimately Ritt, too, found himself blacklisted, though not for as long a period as Bernstein, who endured the decade scrounging to make rent and alimony payments as the witch hunts of the House Un-American Activities Committee bent the film and TV industries to its will.

The Blacklist ruined careers, ended friendships, and sometimes ended lives. Bernstein made it through, but his membership in the Communist Party—a fact he never denied—also made him virtually unemployable throughout his 30s, at a time when he was divorced and had two young children.

For all that, once the Blacklist ended *The Front* did not burst forth from his typewriter and into the waiting arms of an enlightened Hollywood. A film about the recent past in which the country was awash in anti-Communism paranoia was like making a movie today about the Iraq War—a bit of a nonstarter.

"They didn't want to touch it," Bernstein remembers. "They had not had much success with anti-Communist movies," he adds, referring to Hollywood's output of films including *I Married a Communist* and *My Son John*. "Periodically, Marty would try to go set it up, and we couldn't."

Bernstein and Ritt believed they would be telling a seri-



ous story about themselves and about the climate of fear that overtook writers, directors, actors—everyone working in the industry. Out of frustration, Bernstein says, he tried going at the idea sideways by making their protagonist not a writer but "a front." There was, to be sure, something comical about the shallow charade of the Red Scare as Bernstein had experienced it, always on the lookout for friends or relatives whose

"Whenever there's a threat or an apparent threat to it, this is a country that throws out civil liberties and starts a surveillance state. I've seen that happen several times." —Walter Bernstein

names he could put on his scripts.

"Marty was very resistant to it," Bernstein says. "He thought it would trivialize the subject. But I kept insisting it wouldn't and pointing out that there were very serious writers of comedy, like Moliere and Shaw. We shouldn't be ashamed."

Laughter and Lies

In *The Front*, Woody Allen plays Howard Prince, a cashier and part-time hustler who agrees to perform fronting duties for his childhood friend, a blacklisted TV writer played by Michael Murphy. Soon, Howard's success has him fronting for several writers, gradually confusing his fake accolades for actual importance. It takes the suicide of a blacklisted actor and friend—performed by Zero Mostel, also blacklisted during the 1950s—for Howard to realize he isn't just playing a game but has his own stance to take. *The Front* ends on a note of sardonic wish-fulfillment, with Howard suddenly radicalized: He not only refuses to name names but tells members of the Un-American Activities Committee to go fuck themselves. He rides off—to jail—a martyred hero.

Bernstein calls the story arc in *The Front* that of "a schnook who becomes a mensch."

"That theme of the immoral person who becomes moral, who does at the end something that seems to be against his own interests, has been a theme I've seen so many times before. It always works for me," Bernstein says. "I always like to see it."

So do generations who, 50 years on, have never heard of the Blacklist.

A few years ago, Bernstein was invited by the daughter of a once-blacklisted writer to attend a screening of *The Front* at the University of Oklahoma, and the students cheered at Howard Prince's final act of profane defiance. "They showed it to about 400 kids," Bernstein says. "And the questions were ignorant, but they weren't stupid." Many details in *The Front* are borrowed from Ritt's and Bernstein's lives, such as the "dairy restaurant" on Broadway where the blacklisted writers meet. And there's the time Bernstein drove Mostel to perform at a Jewish resort in the Catskills, where the hotel manager, knowing Mostel was desperate for work, cut his fee.

Bernstein told me that there is now early discussion of doing a miniseries based on *The Front*, to be produced by Sony, which holds the rights to the film, and George Clooney's production company, Smoke House Pictures. Bernstein would be an executive producer. His former agent-turned-producer Elliot Webb had the idea, Bernstein said. "It's all very much in flux right now," he adds, with typically hedged expectations.

Though Allen only starred in *The Front*, people now think of it as a Woody Allen film, largely because Allen's put-upon, faux-chivalrous patter is so evident in Howard Prince. In reality, the character is as much Walter Bernstein—perhaps more so—than Woody Allen.



Down in Front

Walter Bernstein is a small man with a lively mind; he hardly seems his age, which is 95. His interest in politics remains active, with a heavy dose of world-weariness. On the afternoon that I sit down with him in the office of his Upper West Side apartment, the phone keeps ringing—a producer son calling from Brazil, a lawyer son calling from L.A. Then the assistant to an executive at Sony called: Would Bernstein be available for lunch, in December?

Walter Bernstein (left) and Woody Allen during production of The Front.

"That's insane," Bernstein says, hanging up, because he's being asked about how his Thursday looks—three months into the future.

Mornings begin with Bernstein writing something, unless he can find a better excuse. To call Bernstein "still active" seems patronizing, but Bernstein is still active. His friend the director James Schamus has asked him to be an extra in

Indignation, a coming film adaptation of the Philip Roth novel. Bernstein says he still gets SAG checks of \$7.50 for a penultimate scene in Annie Hall where he's standing in line outside a movie theater playing The Sorrow and the Pity with Allen, Diane Keaton, and Sigourney Weaver.

HBO paid him to write several sociohistorical movies that it hasn't ended up making . . . at least not yet. One is about 1936 Berlin Olympics, where Jessie Owens trumped Hitler. Another depicts Robert Oppenheimer, inventor of the atom bomb. A third re-told a crucial victory in the young political career of Richard Nixon. when he defeated Helen Gahagan Douglas in the 1950 California Senate race by employing smear tactics and dirty tricks.

"It's discouraging to write and nothing gets done," Bernstein admits. "The Berlin one, they had the idea of doing it. The Oppenheimer one, I came to them with."

But: "If you're in it, either you roll with the punches, or you get laid out. In Hollywood when I was there, that's one reason left-wing writers and people were active politically. They felt the need to have something with meaning in their lives. Something that was important. Partially because of the crap they were taking every day from the studios."

Jeremy Pikser, who co-wrote (with Warren Beatty) the

109.

INT. A SMALL ONE-ROOM APARTMENT - NIGHT

Florence in bed, reading. The doorbell rings. She gets out of bed, puzzled; she is not expecting anyone. The door is on a chain latch. She opens it the length of the chain and peers out. Howard

> HOWARD I've been subpoened.

FLORENCE

I heard

HOWARD They want me to name names.

FLORENCE That's what they want.

HOWARD I'm not going to do it.

There is a pause. They look at each other. Her face softens, she starts to unlatch the chain.

THE ROOM

Later. They are in bed under the covers.

FLORENCE What's important / is they can't kill your talent. Nothing they do can affect that. I know it's hard to give up, but success isn't everything. You're a writer, not a money machine.

HOWARD How would you feel if I wasn't a writer?

FLORENCE (indulgently) I know you. Whatever else you might have to do ... to survive ... you'll find time to write.

HOWARD Suppose I tell you ... I'm not a writer. The Front is about "a schnook who becomes a mensch," says Walter Bernstein. "That theme of the immoral person who becomes moral, who does at the end something that seems to be against his own interests, has been a theme I've seen so many times before. It always works for me."

screenplay for the political campaign satire *Bulworth*, teaches with Bernstein in the dramatic writing program at NYU. Pisker and Bernstein are also writing partners, collaborating on a pilot for a detective series and a feature script based on the life and times of civil rights lawyer William Kunstler.

At a relatively young 65, Pikser observes of their writing sessions: "He gets tired probably before I do, which is saying a lot because I'm the laziest motherfucker there is. I would not do something about Facebook with him. That would be a mistake. But writing about a political lawyer, in the '60s and '70s? I can't think of anyone else."

For the record, Bernstein was blacklisted from 1950 through 1958. It might have been 1959—there are gray areas on the dates because Bernstein was still technically on the Blacklist when Carlo Ponti, the producer husband of Sophia Loren, hired Bernstein to write the screenplay for the Loren movie *That Kind of Woman* on the recommendation of the film's director, Sidney Lumet. It was assumed the credit would be his own name.

Then or now, Bernstein doesn't disavow that he was a member of the Communist Party, which for him meant being active in leftist causes. He still is—if not as a marcher then as someone who remains intellectually engaged. Asked if he ever sees remnants of the Blacklist today, Bernstein answers: "What I see, in particular, is that whenever there's a threat or an apparent threat to it, this is a country that throws out civil liberties and starts a surveillance state. I've seen that happen several times."

Outside In

Bernstein was born in Brooklyn, the son of a schoolteacher. He always wanted to write. His professional career began in prose when, out of Dartmouth College, Bernstein started contributing fiction and reportage for *The New Yorker*, work that continued during his service in World War II as a correspondent for *Yank*, the Army magazine. His writing during the war produced the collection *Keep Your Head Down*, published in 1945. Fifty years later, Bernstein revisited his war years—as well as his subsequent decade on the Blacklist—in the entertaining memoir *Inside Out*.

Bernstein had some headlong experiences during the war. In Italy, he found himself cowering in a foxhole next to a preternaturally calm man who took the occasion to ask Bernstein

stein if he'd read much Tolstoy; only later did Bernstein learn he'd been ducking mortar rounds with the legendary war photojournalist Robert Capa. More famously, Bernstein became the first Western journalist to make it into Yugoslavia, where he scored a one-on-one interview with Marshall Tito.

A year after his discharge from the Army, Bernstein joined the Communist Party. "The move was natural," he writes in *Inside Out*. "I had been there in my heart for some time and what I had seen in the war had only solidified this. The Communists had led the antifascist fight."

His greater ambition was to write for the movies. If he dimly understood that his party affiliation might threaten that ambition, he was several years away from realizing the implications.

In *Inside Out*, Bernstein reflects at one point on what the Blacklist did to his writing process: "In the morning I tried to write—speculative scripts or articles or the occasional short story, but they were desultory, lacking conviction. I seemed to need a validation I could not produce for myself alone."

"I was in a funk," Bernstein tells me of those oppressive years. Throughout the decade he was blacklisted, it was television that kept him employed—barely. Ritt secured him a job writing for *Danger*, a live dramatic series on CBS. Lumet was the show's director, replacing Yul Brynner, who left to work on a Broadway musical, *The King and I*. But soon, Bernstein found himself being visited regularly by the FBI. The same year he began on *Danger*, 1950, he used his first pseudonym. Sometimes, over the ensuing years, he was in need not just of a cover name but a cover person—a front.

He was writing, primarily, for *Danger* as well as CBS' You Are There, a historical reenactment series hosted by Walter Cronkite. Both shows were directed by Lumet and produced by Charles Russell, who gave Bernstein as much protection as he could, while Bernstein found fronts through various connections. They ranged from the female roommate of a friend of Bernstein's sister to a guy named Leo, another friend of a friend, who gambled and had no telephone—a character whom Bernstein would later draw on in creating Howard Prince for *The Front*.

I ask Bernstein if he can remember, some 60 years later, any of the scripts he wrote for *Danger*, which was a live, half-hour anthology series. Soon he was describing an episode he wrote called "The Paper Box Kid," about a hanger-on of a neighborhood gangster. "At the end he does something, goes to the electric chair," Bernstein recalls. "A lot of [his scripts] had downbeat endings, as I think about it—kind of reflecting us."

Not surprisingly, given what was happening among friends, betrayal was another recurring theme. But the writing, as Bernstein describes the work, was hardly precious in an era of live TV. "I remember there was one time Sidney called me and said he was going into rehearsal on a show and they'd discovered that the script had been plagiarized. The

sets had been built and there was a cast, and he said, 'You've gotta write something to fill that.' And I did it. I remember that I wrote it in a day and a half, some kind of cockamamie script. It wasn't any good, but it went on."

Rich and Holy

"I always felt growing up—and when I started to write for *The New Yorker* and the movies—I felt what I think a lot of us felt: You could be rich and holy at the same time," he says. "Then you found out you couldn't be, and it was a big blow. We weren't, as far as our work was concerned, radicals or revolutionary. We wrote for the market."

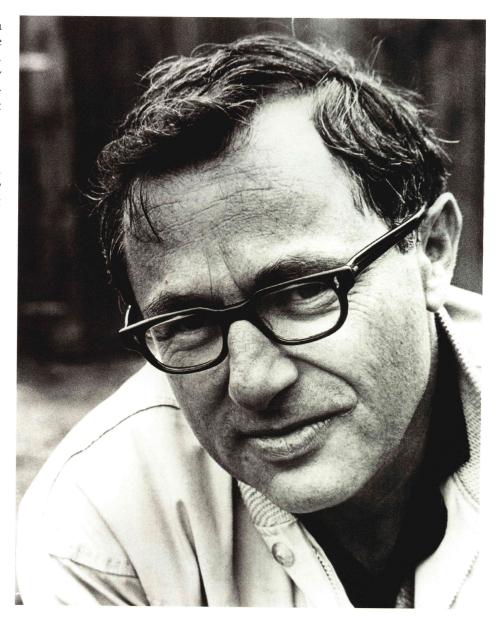
Bernstein worked steadily after the Blacklist lifted. With Lumet as director, he wrote the screenplay for Failsafe, the 1964 thriller that served as a Cold War cautionary tale, with the U.S. launching a nuclear missile at Russia that it triesand fails—to unlaunch. With typical understatement, Bernstein says of the writing process: "It wasn't hard, as I remember it. I wrote it in the Henry Hudson Hotel. They paid for a room, and I would go there every day and have a tuna fish sandwich and a black-and-white milkshake for lunch."

Hanging on the wall above Bernstein's desk are drawings of 19th-century period costumes done by

Dorothy Jeakins, the costume designer on the 1970 film *The Molly Maguires*. Directed by Ritt, *The Molly Maguires* starred Sean Connery as the ringleader of a group of Irish immigrant coal miners who use sabotage to protest working conditions; Richard Harris is the informant sent by authorities to infiltrate the group and bring them down.

To look at Bernstein's credit history, however, is to see just as many "jobs" as political treatises. In the 1970s, he rewrote Ring Lardner's script for *Semi-Tough*, a spoof of the self-realization movement set in the world of pro football. He also wrote *The Betsy*, based on the Harold Robbins novel, and about which Bernstein says: "I had a big fight with my thenwife, who wanted me to take my name off it. She said, 'It's a piece of crap.' And I said, 'Yeah, it's a piece of crap, but I wrote it." And his own name was on it.

Today, as he was in the 1950s when anti-Communist fear-



mongering all but shut down his career, Bernstein is out on an island called ageism. Instead of communist sympathies, now it's his advanced age and the various whims of fate that have always conspired to crush a writer's spirit.

"I wrote a script—this would be a long time ago—[based on] George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*," an earlier anecdote had begun. "I wrote it for Irwin Winkler. Wrote a first draft, sent it to him. He said, 'Great.' He flew into New York with one of the executives from Paramount, we discussed the script and what changes it needed, came to some kind of an agreement, they left, I did the changes, sent it to Irwin. This was 35 years ago. I've yet to hear anything. Not a word."

But it's just another battle in a long writing war. "I believe and still believe in some form of democratic socialism," he says, adding: "I haven't seen it. I won't see it in my lifetime. But I believe in it."

WRITTEN BY ED RAMPELL

History Revisions

SCHOLARS FIND THE NEW IN THE HOLLYWOOD BLACKLIST.

there's urrently surge of interest in the repressive postwar era when crusading Congressional committees and studio moguls persecuted screenwriters and others to stifle cinematic "subversion." those anti-com-During munist witch hunts, talents subpoenaed to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee and/or Joe McCarthy's Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations were pressured to reveal political and union activities and inform on colleagues. Failure to "cooperate" caused "un-

friendly witnesses" to be banned from working in movies, and in some cases, even fined and imprisoned.

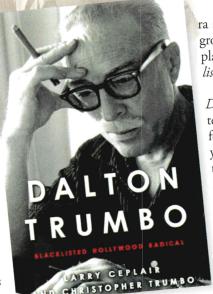
A number of new books, a film series, a play and a museum exhibition relating to the HUAC/McCarthy era have been released or are coming soon.

Professor Jeff Smith points out in Film Criticism, The Cold War, and the Blacklist, Reading the Hollywood Reds that this subject "has been exhaustively researched" by such authors as Dave Wagner, Paul Buhle, and Reynold Humphries. The new wave could be dubbed Blacklist Studies: The Sequel. "All this scholarship begs a larger question," Smith says, "namely, is there anything new to be said about the Hollywood Blacklist?"

But Blacklist scholar Rebecca Prime notes that, "A number of important archival collections, including the records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, were unavailable until recently."

Bio With Brio: The Exile Who Broke a Blacklist

Consider this: Christopher Trumbo wrote the 2003 off-Broadway play *Trumbo: Red, White and Blacklisted,* then the 2007 documentary *Trumbo*; his father, Dalton Trumbo, wrote 1970's *Additional Dialogue*; Bruce Cook authored a 1977 biography about Dalton (adapted by John McNama-



ra as the feature film *Trumbo*). With all that, could new ground be broken by Christopher Trumbo and Larry Ceplair in the 600-ish pages of their *Dalton Trumbo*, *Blacklisted Hollywood Radical?*

Yes, says Larry Ceplair. He points out that "Additional Dialogue only goes up to 1962. It only covers the letters Trumbo wrote and sent to the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, and he lived another 14 years. So there's that big gap I covered." Ceplair adds that while the Cook biography's "interviews are great, he only did archival research at the Trumbo papers in Wisconsin, so again there's lots of details that he didn't go into."

Christopher's two-character theater piece and the nonfiction film *Trumbo* both heavily relied upon Dalton's extensive correspondence and primarily covered the Blacklist period. On the other hand, the new book is a "deeper, broader, and more extensive look" at its

subject's entire life, Ceplair asserts. Christopher conducted an enormous amount of research, made voluminous notes and audio recordings, wrote several sections of the book, and as Dalton's 1940-born son, witnessed many pivotal events related in *Dalton Trumbo*, *Blacklisted Hollywood Radical*. Ceplair calls this biography, published by University Press of Kentucky in January 2015, a "co-production," which, prior to his death in 2011, an ailing Christopher asked Ceplair to complete.

Previously, Ceplair co-wrote 1979's seminal *The Inquisition in Hollywood, Politics in the Film Community, 1930-*



Christopher Trumbo (left) witnessed many pivotal events during the Blacklist period and later wrote about his father, Dalton (right) for stage and screen.

BETTER DEAD

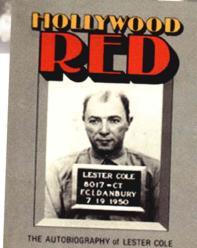
60 with Steven Englund, 2007's The Marxist and the Movies, A Biography of Paul Jarrico, as well as 2011's Anti-Communism in Twentieth-Century America: A Critical History. A professor emeritus of history at Santa Monica College, Ceplair also curated the highly regarded 2002 exhibition "Reds and Black-

lists: Political Struggles in the Movie Industry" at the Motion Picture Academy's Beverly Hills site.

According to Trumbo and Ceplair's book, the screenwriter's greatest achievement, surpassing even his two Oscars and nomination, was engineering "the destruction of the Hollywood Blacklist." The exile who wrote *Exodus* and *Spartacus* in 1960 became the first banished scribe to receive screen credit under his actual name. This might not have exactly resulted in breaking the Blacklist (which lingered for several years more), but there's no doubt that having Trumbo's real name appear onscreen as the credits rolled in two blockbuster epics certainly breached the Blacklist. Ceplair calls Trumbo's odyssey to end this artistic embargo "a great story about how one person can make a difference."

But this biography is no hagiography, as it paints an all-too-human portrait of its protagonist: "Trumbo was a polarizing, unpredictable, unclassifiable person. Few who knew Trumbo were neutral about him. His barbed tongue

and slashing pen drew blood from foe and friend alike. And once he became enraged and engaged, he proved to be a relentless adversary. 'My father,' Mitzi recalled, 'could be so dominant, irascible, and tenacious. He enjoyed confrontation; he never hesitated to jump into a dispute full throttle, and he rarely let anyone else win.' He was not 'a peaceful man, not at all agreeable, not one to step back from a fight.'... Donald Sutherland, who worked with Trumbo in the anti-Vietnam War movement and acted under his direction in Johnny Got His Gun, said: 'Dalton was a contrarian; he had fights. I'm just glad



he never had fights with me."

Indeed, the bio quotes Trumbo's fellow Hollywood Ten screenwriter Ring Lardner Jr., who said at Dalton's memorial service: "He lived at least three normal lives."

Long before being subpoenaed to appear before HUAC in 1947, the so-called "premature antifascist's" leftist labor and peace activism did not go unnoticed. According to the bio: "In October 1939 Trumbo delivered a speech to the Southern California Youth Rally for Peace, which brought him to the attention of the Federal Bu-

reau of Investigation. The special agent in charge of the FBI's Los Angeles office labeled Trumbo a fellow traveler of the Communist Party and opened a dossier on him."

Several months later, an FBI informer fingered Trumbo as an active supporter of the "Communistdominated" United Studio Technicians Guild.

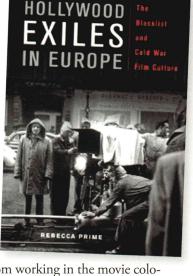
Excommunicated Expats

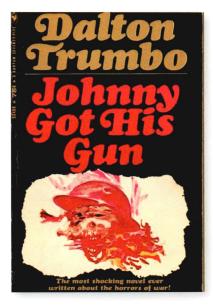
Of the 300-ish talents victimized by HUAC and banned by the studio chiefs'

secret "Waldorf Statement" from working in the movie colony, a few fled overseas to avoid persecution and to seek jobs.

Taking into account the number of books by and about Hollywood's outcasts abroad—including Norma Barzman, Bernard Gordon, Mickey Knox, Lester Cole, and Paul Jarrico—Smith's question "is there anything new to be said about" this topic was posed to Rebecca Prime, author of Hollywood Exiles in Europe, The Blacklist and Cold War Film Culture (Rutgers University Press).

"This story has not been told," asserts Prime. "It's different in that this history had not yet been recorded. Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund's *Inquisition in Hollywood* is the magisterial book and an incredible reference. And it has six pages (I counted) on the exiles who went to Europe. [The authors] acknowledge that it happened, but it wasn't the story they were focusing on. I thought it was amazing there were so many books on the Hollywood Blacklist that treat this





as a domestic phenomenon, something that happened here in the States. The international ramifications of that had not been explored anywhere. No one had taken up the story of what had happened next. Yes, these people left—but what did they do?"

Good question. But did we need it answered in a book? "That was to me a compelling story," Prime continues. "It showed, as we look at the stories of the people who left and the history of the films they made in Europe, how the Hollywood Blacklist crept across the Atlantic and had implications for the European film industry. So its impact was not just felt in America, it was felt internationally."

Her book was prompted by a chance encounter with Suzo Barzman, who was born and raised in France as the daughter of refugees Ben and Norma Barzman. Unlike Rebecca Schreiber's 2008 Exiles in Mexico: U.S. Dissidents and the Culture of Critical Resistance, which Prime acknowledges a "debt to," accounts of the blacklistees' diaspora in Europe had focused on individual experiences, whereas Hollywood Exiles in Europe has a collective sweep.

Prime writes that "during the 1950s and 1960s," this extensive expat creative community "directed, wrote, or starred in almost 100 productions [in Europe], their contributions ranging from crime film masterpieces like *Du rififi chez les homes* (director Jules Dassin, 1955) to international blockbusters such as *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (screenwriters Carl Foreman and Michael Wilson, 1957) to acclaimed art films like *The Servant* (director Joseph Losey, 1963)."

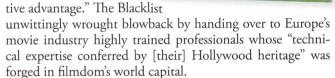
In her groundbreaking, thought-provoking counterhistory (as she calls it), Prime contends: "The professional triumphs of the blacklisted community in Europe played a direct role in hastening the end of the Blacklist in America... they alone as an exile community produced a significant body of film work during the Blacklist era." In doing so, "they were uniquely positioned to contribute to three key developments in postwar European cinema: Hollywood runaway production, the European co-production, and the international

blockbuster. The creative work of the U.S. exiles in Europe represented a distinctly transnational mode of cultural production."

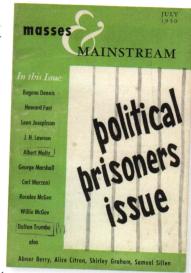
Prime explores the motion picture pariahs' peculiar position in Cold War Europe as anti-American Americans whose stateside revilement as "un-American" bestowed a certain cachet upon them in a Western Europe where millions regularly voted for and belonged to left-wing parties. She investigates the unintended consequences of their expulsion, asking: "To what degree did the exiles' radical politics and status as refugees from le McCarthyisme insulate them

from the anti-American sentiment elicited by America's economic, military, and cultural presence in postwar Europe?"

The film history notes that, "By creating a critical mass of Hollywood-trained talent in Europe, the Blacklist had the unanticipated effect of invigorating both indigenous and international film production in Europe and diminishing Hollywood's competi-



Prime indicates that the greatest aesthetic contribution of those who "made their escape from Hollywood" was in the realm of film noir, where "life imitated art" for expats like Dassin. In terms of form, such as chiaroscuro cinematography and themes of informing and betrayal, they were "adapting film noir and crime film genre conventions to the filmmakers' personal experiences of the Blacklist and exile... Film noir's emphasis on transient spaces and emotions of alienation and estrangement" provided an appropriate mode of expression for displaced transplants in movies such as Dassin's *Riftifi*, Endfield's 1957 *Hell Drivers*, Berry's 1959 *Je suis un sentimental*, and Losey's 1959 *Blind Date*.

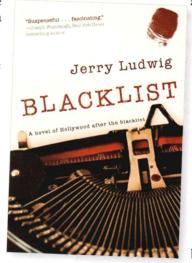


Agitprop and Allegory

In Film Criticism, The Cold War, and the Blacklist, Reading the Hollywood Reds (University of California Press), Jeff Smith answers his own question about whether there's

anything new under the sun to add to Hollywood Blacklist scholarship. His book applies "a metacritical approach to the field of Blacklist studies... The notion that filmmakers used the cinematic medium to examine or comment on the political, moral, and cultural implications of the Blacklist is well documented. What is less well understood is the way the knowledge of these efforts influenced critics' interpretive strategies, the nudge given to them regarding the meaning and significance of particular cycles of postwar cinema."

Smith's complex, theoretical tome is primarily criticism of the criticism about Blacklist-related films. Smith is professor of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and like Rebecca Prime, contributed to 2007's "Un-American"



Hollywood, Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era (Rutgers University Press).

In terms of screen commentary regarding the HUAC/McCarthy era, Smith writes that movies used two "didactic forms... the rhetorical strategies of propaganda and allegory... In propaganda the polemical elements of the work are explicit; indeed, these instructional and agitational aspects are the form's very raison d'etre. In allegories, the didacticism of the work is implicit... In the case of Blacklist allegories this moral dimension involves the evils of government overreach and political repression."

Smith points out, "Hollywood adapted anti-Communism to the generic constraints of film noir, the detective film, and the courtroom drama..." and that *I Married a Communist* "used some of the same personnel" as Jacques Tourneur's 1947 noir classic *Out of the Past* co-starring Kirk Douglas, Robert Mitchum, and Jane Greer. Although *Past*'s screenwriter Daniel Mainwaring declined to pen the former's script (which, Smith notes, led "Hughes... not to renew his option at RKO"), 1949's *I Married a Communist* employed the same production designer, Albert D' Agostino, and cinematographer Nicholas Musuraca, whose noir-ish "menacing shadows ... suggest the threat Communism poses... Musuraca's lighting scheme functions as something of a visual pun. By

moving toward an increasingly shadowy mise-enscène within the Collins home to parallel Brad's [Robert Ryan] growing entanglements with the film's Communist thugs, the film visually reminds us of Communism's threat to Brad's 'domestic security,' a metaphor that equates Brad's marriage and family life with the nation at large... By borrowing certain devices associated with film noir's visual style, anti-Communist noir gives a particular political valence to certain conventions associated with the genre. Darkness here becomes not just a metaphor of existential being, nor is it a mere signifier of noir's bleak worldview. Rather, darkness takes on a pragmatic aspect by cloaking political subversion within a shroud of secrecy."

In doing so, directors of photography not only linked these blatantly propagandistic pictures to the anti-Red rhetoric of demagogues like Richard Nixon, but served to accomplish what the U.S. ju-

dicial system was unable to, "by equating Communists with gangsters, thugs, and petty thieves, film noir could do something that the American government struggled to do, namely to 'criminalize' membership in the Communist Party," which was a legal organization.

Although it could be argued that this unambiguous Red Scare cycle contained an element of metaphor, their explicitly propagandistic quality caused most of them to be "commercial and critical flop[s]." This helped set the stage for the other type of films, the allegorical, which appealed more to the unconscious and were usually deployed by leftist screenwriters

"encoding" messages as "disguised comment on the present," as Smith quotes Ismail Xavier's *Historical Allegory*.

According to Smith, in these HUAC/McCarthy era "allegories, patterns of metaphorical substitution that bridge the gap between the real and unreal, past and present" emerged in several genres: sword-and-sandal historical epics, the Western, and science fiction. Smith writes at length about a number of these cinematic ciphers and symbols, drolly observing that in the latter two genres the terms redskins and Red planet became politicized double entendres. A section in "Chapter 5, The Cross and the Sickle," is cleverly subheaded are you now or have you ever been a CHRISTIAN? THE ROBE AS POLITICAL ALLEGORY. Smith points out the writers for the 1953 Biblical epic include liberal Blacklist opponent Philip Dunne and Albert Maltz, who wrote an original draft before becoming one of the Hollywood Ten. The other film considered in this chapter is the aforementioned Trumbo-scribed Spartacus.

Chapter 6 focuses on *High Noon*, written by Carl Foreman; Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar*, co-written by Yordan and Ben Maddow, who had roots in the left-wing documentary movement; plus Allan Dwan's *Silver Lode*. In "Chapter 7, Loving the Alien," Smith considers numerous sci-fi and monster movies, including *The Blob, It Came From Outer*

Space, The Incredible Shrinking Man, The Thing, Them, I Married a Monster From Outer Space, The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms, The Day the Earth Stood Still, and, in particular, Invasion of the Body Snatchers.

The Communist Party's newspaper reviews picked up on submerged onscreen meanings. Regarding *The Robe, Daily Worker* critic Ben Levine presciently wrote: "The parallels with our own time, it must be admitted, will not be drawn by everyone, or even the majority in our country. But I could not help thinking of our own Smith Act judges [who imprisoned Communists for advocating the U.S. government's overthrow], and of the

Judge of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the scene where Pontius Pilate... asks for water to wash his hands... And when Gaius Marcellus, in 'seeking the name' of Christians, pays a coin per name to a spy. That spy, a fat merchant, looked to me the very image of Whittaker Chambers," an infamous informer.

Screenwriter John Howard Lawson, co-founder and first president of what is now the WGA and later one of the Hollywood Ten, is the author of a discerning book, 1953's *Film in the Battle of Ideas*. Lawson insightfully critiqued movies by director Elia Kazan, whom Victor Navasky wrote in *Nam-*

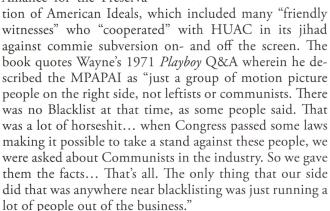


ing Names "emerged in the folklore of the left as the quintessential informer."

A Biography and Memoir

In addition to lots of juicy gossip about the Duke's sex life, Marc Eliot's *American Titan, Searching for John Wayne* (Dey Street Books) contains material on the superstar's virulent anti-Communism.

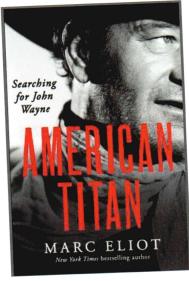
Wayne joined and became president of the right-wing Motion Picture Alliance for the Preserva-



However, the Duke didn't let his reactionary scruples get in the way of his screen career and worked with many leftist talents, most of whom were at some point pilloried by the

Blacklist he helped enforce. In his lost lefty 1940 film, Three Faces West, Wayne portrays a Dust Bowl survivor in this pro-New Deal, anti-Nazi gem directed by Bernard Vorhaus and co-written by Samuel Ornitz, later one of the Hollywood Ten. The 1942 WWII flick Reunion in France was helmed by Jules Dassin, while 1945's Back to Bataan was scribed by soon-to-be exile Ben Barzman and directed by Edward Dmytryk who, in only two years, would also join the Hollywood Ten's ranks. The credits for 1964's Circus World is almost a "who's who" of blacklisted and left-leaning scribes: Julian Zimet, Bernard Gordon, Nicholas Ray, Philip Yordan, as well as Ben Hecht. Christopher Trumbo shared writing credit for Wayne's 1975 policer, Brannigan.

According to Eliot, Duke's longtime collaborator John Ford was "[a]mong the most liberal players at the time" who "donated an ambulance to the cause" of the Spanish Republic and directed *The Grapes of Wrath* (which Eliot dubs "the prototypical leftist Hollywood film," as well



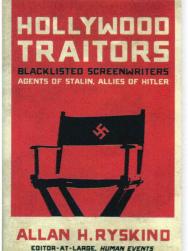
as "the Ford film Wayne disliked most"). Eliot claims "Pappy" ran afoul of the blacklisters, but that "Ford's distinguished war service may have saved his career." An even bigger irony is that Wayne won his sole Best Actor Oscar for 1969's *True Grit*, written by Marguerite Roberts, who'd joined the CPUSA and was blacklisted after she refused to testify before HUAC in 1951.

Academy Award—winner Lee Grant's chatty memoir *I Said Yes To Everything* (Blue Rider Press) is a great read, full of showbiz and Blacklist anecdotes, including about the "mass exodus of the film community to safer ports—New York, Mexico, Paris, London." Unlike many persecuted during the HUAC/McCarthy epoch, Grant might have been what she calls a "lefty"—but not a card-carrying Communist Party member. However, Grant's husband, Arnie Manoff, was "a Red," one of the blackballed writers depicted along with Abe Polonsky and Walter Bernstein in the latter's *The Front*, the 1976 anti-HUAC film starring Woody Allen.

Grant co-starred with Group Theatre co-founder Joe Bromberg in a 1951 play. After he pleaded the Fifth Amendment when testifying before HUAC, Bromberg could no longer act in movies. The actress writes, "[t]he only work he could get was in the theater, but he was a wreck... terrified that some right-wing organization would send militants to attack him onstage."

The harassed actor fled to London, where he died of a heart attack during the run of a play. At Bromberg's memorial service, the bold Grant, who has received three Oscar noms and won the Best Actress Oscar for *Shampoo*, spoke out declaring: "The Un-American Activities Committee knew Joe had a bad heart and kept calling him to testify anyway. I feel the committee ultimately killed him." This public outburst caused the young thesp to be listed in *Red*

Channels, a directory of left-wing actors and "subversives"—and to be blacklisted until 1964.



Red Herrings: Mission to Mischief

Allan Ryskind's Hollywood Traitors, Blacklisted Screenwriters: Agents of Stalin, Allies of Hitler is literally a continuation of an 80-year-old anti-communist family vendetta that goes back to the Writers Guild's earliest days. John Howard Lawson, the Guild's first president, is among Hollywood Traitors' most vilified figures. Ryskind dubs the Guild's cofounder "the Grand Pooh-Bah of the Hollywood Red colony" and "the most fervent inhaler of the

Stalinist line in Hollywood."

Allan's father was playwright-screenwriter Morrie Ryskind, co-founder in 1944 of the Motion Picture Alliance

WRITTEN BY **STANLEY DYRECTOR**

Not Silenced by the Fifth

ROBERT LEES REMEMBERS HUAC.

for the Preservation of American Ideals (members included Ayn Rand, John Wayne, and Roy Brewer). Ryskind crows that his father's MPA "was instrumental in bringing about the seminal HUAC hearings on Hollywood in 1947." Ryskind Sr. volunteered as a "friendly" witness, naming names during his sworn testimony to the House Un-American Activities Committee.

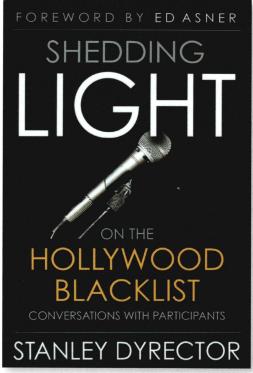
In an attempt to win his father's posthumous approval, Allan Ryskind assassinates the character of people who are mostly dead and no longer able to defend themselves. Along the way, he also defames today's "Anti-American Hollywood." Taking a cue from his informer father, Ryskind castigates and questions the patriotism of George Clooney, Steven Spielberg, Naomi Campbell, Chevy Chase, Robert Redford, Spike Lee, Danny Glover, Shirley MacLaine, Leonardo DiCaprio, Kevin Costner, Harry Belafonte, Ted Turner, Steven Soderbergh, Kevin Spacey, and of course Sean Penn. After all, he writes, "Tinseltown still loves Marxist Thugs."

Virulent name-calling and impugning the loyalty of nonconservatives is the house specialty of Ryskind's publisher, the reactionary Regnery, which also publishes Ann Coulter's books, including *Treason: Liberal Treachery From the Cold War to the War on Terrorism,* plus a veritable who's who of right-wingers: Professional anti-communist informant Whittaker Chambers, Newt Gingrich, David Horowitz, Laura Ingraham, Donald Trump, and William F. Buckley (with whom Morrie helped found *National Review*).

To paraphrase another HUAC informer, Budd Schulberg, "what makes Allan run?" Throughout his jeremiad, Ryskind refers enviously to members of the Hollywood Ten as "famous" and "celebrities." It clearly rankles him that over time the last have become first, that those persecuted by HUAC's auto-da-fé are feted by history—not the witch-hunters.

Robert Lees for his history book, *Shedding Light on the Blacklist: Conversations with Participants.* The following is an abridged excerpt:

We went to Washington, right after The Hollywood Ten, and were called "The Fifth Amendment": Gale Sondergaard and Ann Revere and Waldo Salt, a lot of wonderful people. We were not going to self-incriminate ourselvesthey'd already put guys in jail. So our answer was, "We take the Fifth Amendment." With that we could no longer testify against ourselves. They couldn't ask us, "Who else do you know [to be an informer]," for example. When we went to Washington and took the Fifth, the punishment was no



longer from the committee. It was by the producers. At the time of the Ten, the producers said, "We will not hire anybody who does not cooperate with the committee." When we took the Fifth and the First, the punishment was no longer a fine and a year in jail; it was you no longer could work in Hollywood. If you were not a friendly witness, you were doomed. You were blacklisted.

Sterling Hayden's Shame

[Film actor] Sterling Hayden in Washington says, "I really am not going to do the job of Larry Parks, who made himself an object of pity by saying, 'Don't make me crawl through the mud, don't ask me to name names.' I'll tell you who I am." The committee said, "Name names or else." So now Sterling Hayden is being brought there, as a big star, to make the committee look good. And the point was that Sterling Hayden, in trying to make the committee look good, became an informer. He said, "I don't know anybody's names in our group of subversives; we only went by first names." Well, it turned out to be, "I do know two: Abe Polonsky and Robert Lees," and he gave addresses. We were coming up the very next day [to testify before HUAC], and our throats were cut. That's what Sterling Hayden did.

When I started to write some memoirs of that period, I came across this wonderful book by Hayden, *The Wanderer*, in which he says all the things I would like to hear. And I know Abe Polonsky, who's now dead, would like to hear them say, "What a

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jerk and what a terrible person I was." I'll read a couple passages. He's writing about the big hearing room that we all saw on television, during the newsreels. He remembers we were sitting with this crowd of people, and with the cameras, and there was the committee, and the guy in the chair, who was Sterling Hayden. And Hayden writes, "Above this crowded room, like a mirage, stands a group of people who once were friends of mine. They look at me with grave and saddened faces. No one says a word. I think of Larry Parks, who not 10 days ago sat in this very chair and by pleading with the CommitDaily Variety talked about Will Geer and myself, when we were on the stand, and said we "gave a Fancy Dan performance." When I came home from Washington and knowing my throat was cut and I'd never work again, my wife met me at the plane and said, "Oh, here's Fancy Dan."

tee—by begging them not to make him crawl in the mud—consigned himself to oblivion. Well, I hadn't made that mistake. Not by a goddamned sight. I was a real daddy longlegs of a worm when it came to crawling."

And then he writes this: "Not often does a man find himself eulogized for having behaved in a manner that he himself despises. I subscribed to a press-clipping service. They sent me 2,000 clips from papers east and west, large and small, and from dozens of magazines. Most had nothing but praise for my one-shot stoolie show. Only a handfull—led by the *New York Times*—denounced

this abrogation of constitutional freedoms whereby the stoolie could gain status in a land of frightened people."

Hayden had reasons for why he informed. Because of his children. A psychiatrist had told him, "Inform and get it off your chest." Hayden was becoming a big star, where before he was just not much of a man to conjure with. And all these things came together.

Abraham and I forgave Sterling Hayden for a very good reason. He apologized. He said, "I did a terrible thing." Hayden was so terribly driven by this that he became a drunk.

[Director] Ed Dmytryk turned back after being defiant alongside The Ten and decided to inform. "I'm a director," he said, "I have to be on a set. I can't do what you writers can do. You can change your name. Under pseudonyms, you can write. But I have to be on the set and I can't do this. I'm sorry." So he named names and he got back to directing.

Daily Variety talked about Will Geer and myself, when we were on the stand, and said we "gave a Fancy Dan performance." When I came home from Washington and knowing my throat was cut and I'd never work again, my wife met me at the plane and said, "Oh, here's Fancy Dan."

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A Dish Best Served

I had two places to go. I had a brother-in-law in the restaurant business, and my brother in the clothing business. The restaurant business was my chance to be a maitre d', because my father-in-law wanted me to go out of Hollywood, which he thought was a den of god-knows-what iniquity, and go to Tucson, Arizona, where he had taken a place for his health,

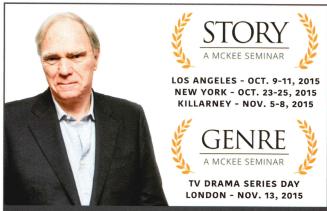


and bring the kids, his grandchildren. Get away from that terrible town, which, incidentally, burned a swastika on my lawn before I left. I'm supposed to be a terrible Red, and we were going to overthrow the government by force and violence. We did nothing but comedies (*Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*). The producer, when he was called to Washington, actually said he had to watch Abbott and Costello to make sure that we wouldn't throw anything in that could be subversive. It was a crazy time.

Half of my family wouldn't even speak to me, who knew me from the day I was born, because I'm the devil with the horns. Neal Gabler wrote a book called *How the Jews Invented Hollywood*. He talked about the fact that there was Goldwyn, there was Mayer, there was Harry Cohn, there were the Warner brothers, there was Laemmle—all Jewish. When the committee came to town, they'd ask John Garfield, "Oh, what was your original name? Mr. Garfinkel?" They made a point of this.

These guys were from the South; they were very reactionary. They were the worst people in the world on that committee. And the producers were very, very conscious of that fact and wanted to say they were Americans first and Jews second. They did want to say, "We're really Americans, for God's sake." This is the same thing that happened with the Rosenberg trial, by the way. The judge was Jewish. Roy Cohn, the prosecutor, was Jewish. And they were set up deliberately on this basis. If they freed these people, it would be, "Look, they're Jews, they want to set them free." The Rosenbergs, supposedly atomic spies, were executed. The point being that they said, "Look, we are Americans first and Jews second, and this proves it."

Louis B. Mayer and, god only knows, Jack Warner, practically crawled in front of this committee, saying, "We always tried to do patriotic pictures. Anything we can do to help this committee. We won't hire any of these people." And I don't know how many people realize the pressure that was being put on Jewish producers to say, "Look, we're not Jewish, we're American." In fact, they very rarely had Jewish characters. They always had the Catholics, *Going My Way*, anything but any kind of a Jew. No Rabbis got on the screen.



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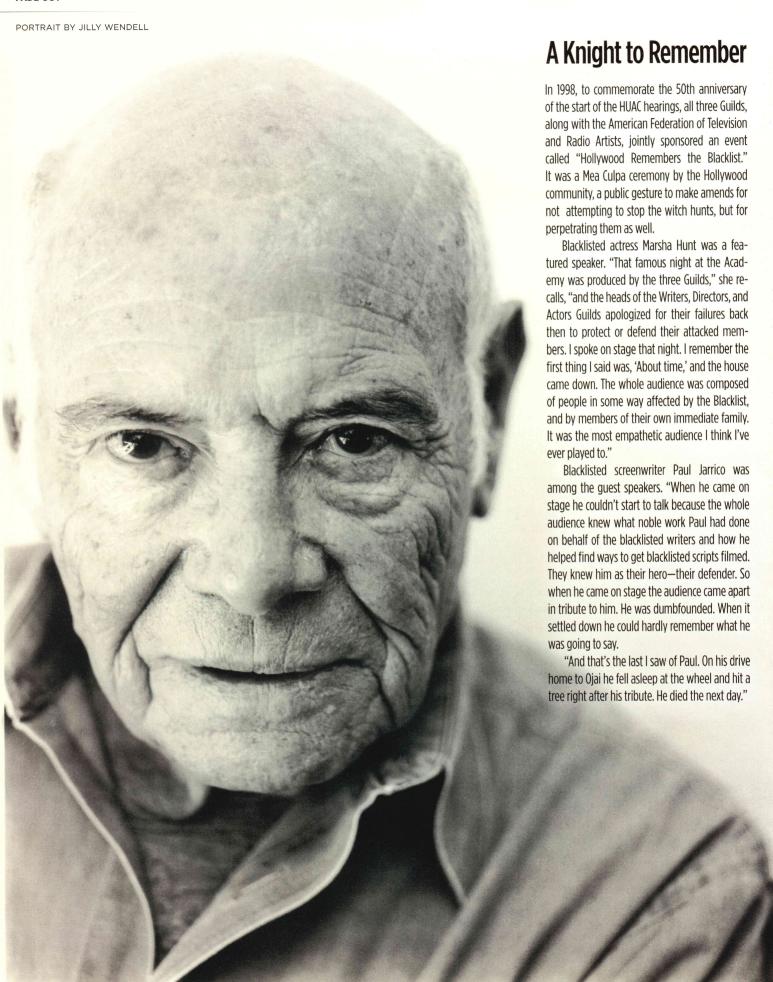
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